

UNIQUE DICTATOR

UNIQUE DICTATOR

A Study of Eamon de Valera

by
DESMOND
RYAN

"Frankly, he had never seen anything quite like him. Mr. de Valera was perfectly unique, and the poor distracted world had a good right to be profoundly thankful that he was unique."

Mr. LLOYD GEORGE.

"What thou hast prayed for, thou shalt have, but the Lord saith there has not come, and there will not come after the Apostles, a man more admirable, were it not for thy hardness."

The Angel to Saint Patrick.

LONDON
ARTHUR BARKER LIMITED
GARRICK STREET

First published 1936

Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. CONNELL LTD.
at the University Press, Edinburgh

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THIS book is more a defence than a condemnation of Eamon de Valera, but it will not please the admirers or the enemies of de Valera and it is certain that it will please him even less. But it will be welcome to the reader who prefers facts to rhetoric and recrimination. It expresses the view of no existing Irish party and may be summed up in its title and the two quotations on the title-page. In Ireland Mr. Lloyd George's candid words were regarded as one of the highest possible compliments that could be paid to its subject; in Great Britain, possibly, as a mere statement of fact. But no student of de Valera's career can quarrel with the statement "perfectly unique"; except, indeed, the grammar. It is one of the most apt descriptions ever given by one great man to another; that it was given in the heat of controversy in no way detracts from it: it was not the first brilliant and truthful phrase of its author for which Mr. de Valera had cause to be profoundly thankful.

So much for the adjective, but why the noun? To call Eamon de Valera Unique Dictator is merely to state a truth that emerges clearly from the study of his career as described in these pages, and not only to adopt half-ironically a convenient phrase of his critics. Circumstances and virtues of his own have made him a dictator,

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cause to smile the wrong side of their faces. After all, he has won his election over the most formidable forces within and without, and such an achievement shakes even the cynics. It shook the hearty Mr. J. H. Thomas to some purpose.

So the critics and the cynics retire to their last ditch protesting that the man is a formulist who has had greatness thrust upon him. It would be nearer the truth to say that he alone has ever succeeded in reducing himself to a formula, and that if not born great, he has achieved greatness. In half a dozen sentences taken almost at random from his speeches his purpose and biography can be summed up, whatever ending to them is hidden in time to come, failure or success:

“I believe fundamentally in the right of the Irish people to govern themselves. . . . I entered politics as a soldier, as one who stood for the principles of those who proclaimed the Republic in 1916. . . . I was reared in a labourer’s cottage here in Ireland. I have not lived solely among the intellectuals. The first fifteen years of my life that formed my character were lived among the Irish people down in Limerick; therefore I know what I am talking about; and whenever I wanted to know what the Irish people wanted I had only to examine my own heart and it told me straight off what the Irish people wanted. . . . One of my earliest dreams, next to securing Irish independence, was that there might be reconciliation between the peoples of these two islands . . . a peace that can be as lasting as human peace can be. . . . Had our nation secured its complete freedom it would, I believe, be now leading the world in solving peacefully some of the problems that are likely to be solved elsewhere only by violent revolution.”

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All de Valera's speeches are but an explanation and amplification of this. He remains the de Valera here portrayed. In brief, he sums up in himself and his life the working out to their logical conclusion of the ideals of the movement loosely and conveniently called Sinn Fein, tempered by a sincere, if somewhat rigid, idealism as expressed and served by a personality often puzzling, never ignoble and worthy of the most unstinted respect. For all this, it is difficult to label him. Even more difficult than it is to label Parnell, Davitt, Redmond, Griffith, Childers, Rory O'Connor, Cosgrave; in spite of their distinct personalities, to a great extent, we can identify them with their political creeds: but de Valera remains always incalculable.

His alert, tall, spare, well-knit figure, dark, clear, thoughtful eyes, gracious and aloof manner suggest rather the monkish recluse than the fighter. It is impossible not to respect and admire Mr. de Valera at the first meeting. The man is austere, dignified and courteous, whether in private or on the platform. There is more than a hint of force in reserve; at its best a strength to stand alone, at its worst a domineering self-righteousness. He is a magnificent listener, and in his fifty-odd years he must have listened to innumerable knaves and fools, and nearly always suffered them gladly. Never once in his life has he made a personal attack, and the worst thing he has ever said of a political opponent was to call him a cipher or to intimate gravely that if he closed his mouth the air might be fresher. He has apologised handsomely now and then—and it has been necessary only now and then—for trifles any other politician would have forgotten even as he spoke them, or brazened it out, or gone one better.

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A scholar and an intellectual by nature, he has endured public meetings and crowds for years, although it is known he regards this as the greatest possible sacrifice any man could make for Ireland, and prays to Heaven for patience every time he makes a speech. At his worst, he has the manner of a schoolmaster, but he is no pedagogue. It is a chance that he has not passed his life as a professor of Higher Mathematics. When Mr. Cosgrave clapped him in jail he played handball with his guards in the mornings and read Einstein in the evenings; when he wearies of his lifelong arguments with British and Irish politicians, he turns in the spells between controversies and conferences to the latest expert's work in those sciences for consolation and refreshment.

Forced by conviction, the urge of his Irish and Spanish blood, a sense of duty and the circumstances of his time into the hard and dramatic life of a revolutionary leader, de Valera, for all the blaring of the limes and high lights, has remained a man of thought and never ceased from mental adventures and searchings even as he weighs a word in some political pronouncement with the maddening deliberation of a chess-player. When the Treaty crisis came, he mastered his anger and disappointment, donned the most fitting of his robes, those of Chancellor of the National University, and honoured Dante at the Sexcentenary celebrations. While the embers of the Anglo-Irish struggle and the Civil War still smouldered, he was studying economics and planning for calmer days. In his youth, his first biographer, David T. Dwane, records it was the same: de Valera spent his time between his books in solitude, in sport on the East Limerick hills and in making peace among his more quarrelsome school-fellows. After Easter Week,

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with all the storms of five days' heavy fighting behind him and a death sentence hanging over him, he read St. Augustine's *Confessions*, thanked the jailers briefly who brought his unexpected reprieve, and went back to his reading. His mind is a balance that hovers long but in the end swings true.

Searching questions rise before every student of this personality and career. The British Press, almost without exception, the brood of mockers, the searchers of speeches, the limelit, self-conscious Dublin autograph album poets and exporters of Liffey-side twittings and twitterings have done their best to debunk de Valera. Who has not heard of "until God Almighty blots out our tyrants," "constitutional method of settling our grievances," "blasting Ulster like a rock from our path," "oath in the best interests of Ireland," "wading through blood," "not doctrinaire Republicans," "ten-foot pikes," "engine running away without its train"? He has been accused of being an ambitious schemer, an outsider, who by guile and circumstances became the enigmatical leader of a warm-hearted, unsuspecting and simple-minded nation; of sole or chief responsibility for the Irish Civil War; of being a "Kerensky" before he came to power and a "Lenin" afterwards; of being a dull, pedantic, piqued professor, who only took up Irish politics because he had not sufficient brains to learn enough "Erse" to pass for some petty post in a back-water of the Civil Service; of vanity, lack of humour, inhumanity, duplicity and selfishness. All these charges without exception are untrue, and can be proved untrue. They have picked de Valera to pieces, and found everything but an answer to the question: why has this unpretentious, persistent, scrupulous, scholarly and cour-

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ageous man retained the affection and trust of his people for over twenty years, and why even with his course unfinished has he achieved so much of his original aims as he has?

In what follows will be found the answer to that riddle.



EIGHTY-TWO entered its autumn: a year of turmoil, terror and transition. "Class is arrayed against class in social strife," Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had cried the previous year, "and now thirty thousand soldiers and twelve thousand policemen are barely sufficient to enable the Government to protect the lives and property of the Queen's subjects in Ireland! . . . Mr. Parnell and those who follow him have never concealed the fact that their chief object is not the removal of grievances in Ireland, but the separation of Ireland from England. Why, only a few months ago, Mr. Parnell speaking in Ireland said that he would never have joined the Land League, he would have taken no part in this great agitation which has been called into existence to redeem the Irish people from the consequences of centuries of wrong, if he had not thought it would have helped him in the Nationalist and Separatist movement in which he chiefly takes an interest. How can we satisfy these men? Our object is not the same as theirs; we want to remove every just cause of grievance. They want to magnify grievances and to intensify differences. We want to unite the Irish people and the English and the Scotch in bonds of amity . . . in bonds of amity and cordial union just as much as Scotland is united to England, although the time was when Scotch-

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men felt as bitter a hostility to the union as Irishmen now profess to feel."

So a Land Bill was brought in and Parnell clapped in jail and a Yorkshire Quaker ruled Ireland, or tried to. For Eighty-Two was no year to gladden a Quaker in an Ireland with a Parnell under lock and key. And this Mr. Forster, who had worn out much shoe leather to relieve the Irish Famine more than thirty years before, was no Quaker in his methods. The Land League, evictions, murders, moonlighting went on, and Mr. Forster packed the jails until men began to wonder where he would find room for his next batch of suspects. The Invincibles organised themselves under his very nose, and when Gladstone and Parnell made the Kilmainham Treaty to let Parnell out of jail, to slow down the Land agitation in its grimmer phases and throw over Forster and his policy, the Invincibles unmade it by murdering Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, Under-Secretary, in broad daylight in Phoenix Park.

So four days later there was a new Coercion Bill. On the spot in Phoenix Park where Cavendish and Burke had fallen an unknown hand laid a cross of stone, and Lady Frederick Cavendish declared publicly she wanted no other monument. The Fenians and the Land League were charged with the crime in England. In New York, John Devoy, who had rallied the Fenians behind Parnell, Fenian refugee and leader, implacable plotter and fighter, wrote sharply in denial:

"Coercion and political brutality, the active assistance given by the Government to the work of evicting landlords, had aroused passions which neither the Government, the popular leaders, nor the Church could control, and, under such circumstances, a few exasperated men

could be easily found to execute whatever vengeance their passions would picture to them as a service to their country."

Not all the Irish-Americans were so dispassionate, and indeed Devoy himself taunted Forster that the assassins "with cool daring" could attack his officials under his eyes. The Parnell-Davitt manifesto denouncing the Invincibles was sourly received. "A fair fight with the Saxon, quotha?" angrily runs an Irish-American's open letter of the time to the moderate A. M. Sullivan, "Hast read the history of the Saxons? Nothing but bullets, sir, will avail!" In New York, too, a young man of twenty-five, Thomas J. Clarke, thought dangerous thoughts and prepared to sail to London on a mission that would close him in a cell for fifteen years. And Detective Mallon and James Carey and Brady, the Invincibles, went on playing a game of wits with each other in Dublin.

Eighty-Two wore on towards autumn. Parnell and Gladstone, the landlords and the Land League faced each other, and already whispers of the Parnell split that lay in the years ahead escaped from the grave of the Kilmainham Treaty. And the voices of Michael Davitt and Tim Healy were heard by the American exiles with their bitter memories of famine, eviction, the broken insurrection of Sixty-Seven. And Parnell was again behind the prison bars with John Dillon. And in some remote Clare cabin, it may be, a tattered booklet was opened, the ancient prophecies of Saint Malachi, and at the page that told the simple who sought consolation in the future for the ills of the present: "a Spaniard shall free Ireland."

In New York on October 14, 1882, Eamon de Valera was born.



EAMON DE VALERA was born in New York, October 14, 1882. The son of Vivian de Valera, a Spanish artist who had spent his youth in the Basque provinces, and Catherine Coll, an Irishwoman from Bruree, Co. Limerick, a school teacher who had left Ireland two years before her marriage. Both Eamon de Valera's parents were keen in intellect and enthusiasm for things of the mind and the spirit, but he was scarcely to know them. They gave him that twin ancestry of subtlety and fire and stubborn traditions that honoured both the monastic cell and the drawn sword, the theological treatise and steel and fire for the Napoleonic invaders. But it was County Limerick and not the United States nor Spain that moulded Eamon de Valera. For after a few years of marriage, de Valera's father died suddenly after a short illness at the age of thirty-two and his son was sent home in charge of an uncle, Edmund Coll, to his mother's people in Bruree, to be reared on a small farm among the hills.

This opening of de Valera's life has its own significance. Particulars of his early life are few but significant. His first and most enthusiastic biographer has filled one eulogistic book, *Early Life of Eamon de Valera*, with minutiae, rhapsodies and digressions: and, with due gratitude, these can be passed over very briefly, or

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studied at leisure in Mr. David T. Dwane's own pages. This first biographer had his own difficulties, but they were mainly concerned with the physical life of his manuscript that escaped almost miraculously military raiders and accidents by search, fire and rail, but these are nothing to those which confront subsequent biographers. The first difficulty is Mr. de Valera himself, who has always frowned on or politely discouraged any attempt to write him up authoritatively. The second difficulty lies in the very circumstances of Mr. de Valera's life, his emergence from comparative obscurity to national leadership in 1916, his eclipse in 1922, his triumph ten years later. The third difficulty is that Mr. de Valera is still very much alive, the centre of not only admiration but embittered controversy.

Until 1932, these difficulties were formidable enough to silence any honest writer. But in 1932, Mr. de Valera won his decisive General Election in the teeth of all the hostile prophets and became both the national leader and a world figure. And when you become a world figure what was previously a party football belongs to mankind. It is then time to attempt some audit and record of the man who has led Ireland from 1916 until to-day, and in such a study the beginnings are significant.

The stormy Eighties, a dim recollection of the United States, the ancestry, Spanish, Irish with a touch of the Vikings, the East Limerick hills with ruined monasteries and patriotic legends and memories of Sarsfield and the Gaelic heroes within twenty miles of the lordly Shannon, an old home of Gael, Norman, warrior and monk as food for dreams and rambles, in all these lie the key to the understanding of Eamon de Valera. His youth is the record of a silent studious youth with the two

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ambitions of learning and sport. In one of the few personal glimpses that relieved the usual cold logic of his speeches, he has spoken of reading the exploits of Wallace and the wars of Napoleon on the hillsides in his boyhood, thrilled and dazzled by Scot and Corsican alike. Half his life can be summarised as the record of a brilliant student and professor. Until 1916 his further life is almost to be thus dismissed, and only a tardy train and an absent vote in 1912 might seem to have saved him from spending his days in Cork as a professor of mathematical physics. And yet what chance is there in these things? De Valera was born in the storm of the Eighties, his home had strong Nationalist traditions, and among the Bruree hills no book was needed to blow the spark within him to flame. Was it not in Limerick that modern Irish history began as the Irish flag went down for over two centuries and the Irish marched away with Sarsfield and a more bitter Treaty controversy began than ever de Valera was to know?

This background, ancestry and memories were enough to shape de Valera, and herein, once and for all, is to be found the final answer to that foolish legend that would make of him, as of Parnell before him, something romantic, exotic and strange to Ireland. But, until he stepped overnight into the grim melodrama of the Ringsend flour mill and national leadership, de Valera was outwardly swayed more by scholastic enthusiasms than militant ones, unless perhaps his days sniping rabbits on the Bruree hills be counted or his forays into football scrums, obstinate with head down, all concentrated on the leather.

And yet all the accounts of his youth suggest the justification of his most famous phrase, that he had only

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to look into his heart to find the age-old Irish aspiration for freedom mirrored there. Of his mother's family, the Colls, a local proverb said: "The Colls and the Clearys run Limerick between them." And all around him from Bruree itself, the seat of distant Munster Kings; along the banks of the river Maigue famous in Gaelic annals for the humble poets who had sung its beauties in the Penal night; in the ruins of some ancient priory in a grass-deep pasture; in the legends of the old people or in the pages of the life of Sarsfield the greatest of Limerick's storied ghosts; from dim impressions of the Irish exiles and the lifting shadows of the Parnell split which had laid Irish political life in futility and bitterness in his most impressionable years: here surely was a mine from which to draw the true ore of Ireland.

Even in his schooldays the future casts a predictive shadow. The movement that first brought him into public life was that which also brought many of the founders of the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Fein there: the cultural and literary movement for the revival and preservation of the Irish language. After his primary education had ended at the Bruree National school he went at the age of thirteen to the Christian Brothers at Charleville, now Rathluirc, where he won several scholarships and a tribute from his teachers for his powers of concentration and industry. Canon Peter O'Leary, too, the most vital and influential of modern writers in the language revival of the Nineties, which rescued the Irish language from pedants and dozy societies and brought the speech of the Gaelic-speaking folk into life and print, had held a classical school there, and among his pupils was the future Archbishop Mannix,

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later to graduate from a staid Maynooth ecclesiastic to something akin to a prelate turbulent in the view of British statesmen at least. So here preceded de Valera an inspiration and a future ally.

Much has been written round the amazing mathematical capacity of the youthful de Valera, to his pain doubtless, for ostentation is alien to his speech and character. Says one eulogist: "He was recognised as one of the greatest mathematicians in Ireland of his years, and had he continued his mathematical career it is possible that the historians of the future would put him on a pedestal side by side with Hamilton Rowan." Similar statements have infuriated calmer-minded critics, like Arnold Bennett, to deny any intellectual capacity to de Valera, or like Frank Harris to retort bluntly that the man is a nonentity.

Mr. Dwane quotes a summary of his career at Blackrock College, to which he gained admittance with a £60 scholarship:

"Mr. de Valera read a brilliant Intermediate and University course and led at several public examinations one of the most successful classes that ever passed through the College. His University record was particularly creditable, when it is borne in mind that it was made while he was engaged for some hours daily as junior master in the Intermediate College.

"So marked was his success in this department that he was soon entrusted with the higher classes, and on the Professorship of Mathematics and Physics becoming vacant in Rockwell he was immediately appointed. He had charge of the Honours Senior Grade and the Honours University classes in Mathematics and Physics. One of his pupils got first Mathematical exhibition in the

Senior Grade. Several got honours and all were remarkably successful.

“ On leaving Rockwell he was appointed Professor of Mathematics in the Training College, Carysfort, where his work was characterised by the same energy, zeal, ability and success which marked it in Rockwell. As a lecturer on the Mathematical Honours Courses of the Royal University of Ireland he was much sought after, and it was noteworthy that for a number of years several of the candidates who obtained outstanding distinctions in the University examinations were his pupils. He was devoted to learning and was extremely popular both in the classroom and the athletic field.”

While at Rockwell, de Valera graduated at the Royal University in Mathematical Science in 1904. On his return to Dublin he taught Mathematics, Latin and French in the principal Dublin Colleges, including the old University College, Stephen's Green; Maynooth; Belvedere; Clonliffe; Dominican College, Eccles St.; Loreto College, Stephen's Green; Trinity College; and the Carysfort Training College for teachers. He won the reputation of turning the abstractions of mathematics into delights for his students, while such judges as Professors MacWeeney and Magennis are quoted by Mr. Dwane as paying tributes to de Valera's enthusiasm and grasp of Higher Mathematics and Physics as well as much important original research to his credit. These early studies of de Valera, it is said by those who know him intimately, have remained lifelong enthusiasms; he follows them with the same keenness as in his days as a professor, and during some important political conference he will send out for the latest work by some expert in these abstruse sciences and refresh

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himself from the monotony of round tables and the vivid verbiage of diplomats and politicians. During his Intermediate and University courses, de Valera won six scholarships and on one occasion was the second in all Ireland.

On the foundation of the National University of Ireland, de Valera commenced to read for his M.A. degree, but was compelled to postpone it by his duties in the Carysfort Training College. Professor Conway, under whom he studied, regretted the interruption and paid a tribute to his student's unusual brilliancy and originality. At this period de Valera also studied the theory and philosophy of education and completed his mastery of Irish. It is clear that de Valera's academic handles of Bachelor of Arts and Science hardly represent his actual intellectual force and capacities. Even then his gaze was starward, for he studied spectroscopy, astrophysics and electro-optics under the Astronomer Royal for Ireland, Professor Edmund Whittaker, and impressed him with his wrestlings with the darker mazes of natural philosophy. Of all de Valera's beginnings this is the most significant: his preoccupation with the science of abstractions, the sweep of the starry skies, his methodical mastery of the Irish tongue, and his capacity to hold and lead others through bleakness and much subtle argument to the delights of each.

Mr. Dennis Gwynn, in his biography of de Valera, has left on record a somewhat sharp pen picture of the appearance of his subject at the National University:

"He was exceptionally tall, considerably over six feet in height, a very serious-looking man in his early thirties, with a long nose and spectacles, and a strangely foreign expression. His clothes of rough home-spun also made

him conspicuous; and he often wore a most unusual cap, with a prominent peak and flap folded across the top, rather like an airman's helmet."

There is little rhapsody here. Mr. Alan Downey, in his foreword to Matthew Butler's *De Valera*, helps to paint a more poignant portrait, and it is suggestive if one contrasts the present-day profile and its calm-browed dignity and force to an earlier tousled-haired, aggressive-eyed, firm-jawed, moustached portrait of the de Valera of 1916:

"Not long ago I met a Volunteer who had fought in Easter Week. 'I remember de Valera,' he said to me, 'as he was in 1916. A soft country boy, with a boy's enthusiasm lighting up his face. Now see what they have done to him. See what an agony his fellow-countrymen have made him live through. His face is that of a young man still, but lined and seamed with the terrible ordeal he has, thank God, lived through.' "

In his early thirties de Valera was in the full grip of a movement outwardly academic, but in reality one of the most revolutionary movements that has ever swayed the youth of Ireland: the Gaelic League. The dominant Irish Parliamentary Party had little use for youth, and it was, indeed, a current joke that Mr. John Dillon preferred the Devil to the opinion of a young man. It is not surprising, therefore, that de Valera, like the majority of those who afterwards made the Easter insurrection, could not in his youth be drawn into what passed for political discussions. Home Rule was a slogan to enliven the British party game: no longer was there a Parnell to lend it magic.

De Valera, in spite of that delightful invention that he was driven into militant politics because he failed

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oldest and in many respects one of the greatest of the nations. Ireland has much to seek from the rest of the world, and much to give back in return, much that she alone can give.

“Alone among the countries of Western Europe, Ireland never came under the sway of Imperial Rome. When all her neighbours were in tutelage, she was independent, building up her own civilisation undisturbed. When Christianity was brought to her shores it was received with joy and eagerness, and held with a tenacity of which there is hardly such another example in human story.

“Because she was independent of the Empire, Ireland escaped the anarchy that followed its fall. Because she was Christian, she was able to take the lead in Christianising and civilising the barbarous hordes that had overrun Britain and the West of Europe. This lead she retained until the task was accomplished and Europe had entered into the glory of the Middle Ages.

“The memories of Irish Saints—Colmcille and Adamnan, Columbanus and Gall, Virgilius and Cathaldus—founders of monasteries and sees, heroic preachers of the Gospel, scholars and patrons of learning—are still venerated in the lands where they toiled. The foundations of these Irish monks, notably the monasteries of Iona, Bobbio and St. Gall, became like the famous schools of Ireland itself, great centres of religious and secular learning in the Middle Ages.

“During the most of this great missionary period, Ireland was harassed by Norse invaders. Heathens and barbarians themselves, they attacked the centres of Christianity and culture, and succeeded in a great measure in disorganising both. That Ireland in such

circumstances continued the work of the apostolate in Europe is an eloquent proof of the zeal of her people, a zeal gloriously manifested once more in modern times in North America and Australia and in the mission fields of Africa and China.

“ Since the period of her missionary greatness, Ireland has suffered a persecution, to which for cruelty, ingenuity and persistence there is no parallel. It did not break, it strengthened the spirit and devotion of her people, and prepared them for the renewal of their mission at a time when it is of no less vital importance to the world than was the mission of the Irish saints of the seventh and eighth centuries to the world of their day.

“ Next to her services to religion, Ireland’s greatest contribution to the welfare of humanity has been the example of devotion to freedom which she has given throughout seven hundred years. The invaders who came to Ireland in the twelfth century belonged to a race that had already subjugated England and a great part of Western Europe. Like the Norsemen before them, it was in Ireland that they met the most serious resistance—a resistance that was continued generation after generation against the successors of the first invaders until our own time, a resistance that will inevitably continue until the last sod of Irish soil is finally freed.

“ During the first five centuries of this struggle everything was taken from the Irish people, until in the seventeenth century an Irish Catholic in the eyes of the law possessed no rights of property, no rights of citizenship, no rights of education, no right to life itself in the land of his fathers.

“ Little by little, almost all that was taken away has been won back, and to-day the greater part of the country

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is once more in the ownership and subject to the rule of the Irish people. Ireland has taught the world that a brave and resolute nation can never be conquered. . . .

“ . . . The Irish genius has always stressed spiritual and intellectual rather than material values. That is the characteristic that fits the Irish people in a special manner for the task, now a vital one, of helping to save Western civilisation. The great material progress of recent times, coming in a world where false philosophies already reigned, has distorted men’s sense of proportion; the material has usurped the sovereignty that is the right of the spiritual. Everywhere to-day the consequences of this perversion of the natural order are to be seen. Spirit and mind have ceased to rule. The riches which the world sought, and to which it sacrificed all else, have become a curse by their very abundance.

“ In this day, if Ireland is faithful to her mission, and, please God, she will be, if as of old she recalls men to forgotten truths, if she places before them the ideals of justice, of order, of freedom rightly used, of Christian brotherhood—then, indeed, she can do the world a service as great as that she rendered in the time of Colmcille and Columbanus, because the need of our time is in no wise less.

“ You sometimes hear Ireland charged with a narrow and intolerant Nationalism, but Ireland to-day has no dearer hope than this: that, true to her own holiest traditions, she should humbly serve the truth and help, by truth, to save the world.”

No more misleading belief has been spread abroad by the post-Treaty critics of de Valera than that he was of no consequence or importance in the different Nationalist movements until some lucky chance swept him on a wave

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of mob emotion to power and prominence. There is, indeed, this half-truth behind all this ungracious and grudging denigration: de Valera's reserve and conscientiousness made him stand aside from full executive responsibility until after 1916. His function seemed to be rather that of listener and servant than advocate and leader. But even before 1916 de Valera was a well-known and highly respected worker and teacher in the Dublin classrooms of the Gaelic League. He was often to be seen at some social gathering of the Ard Craobh branch of that organisation there in the several classes from 1908 onwards, much respected by his students with no more against him than some friendly passing quip on his unusual name, somewhat gaunt and dark of aspect, fierce-eyed with the wild optical glint of the period, called by the hostile the "Gaelic League eye."

One of the most untiring enthusiasts and popular teachers in the Ard Craobh was Miss Sinead Ní Fhlannagain (a de-anglicisation of Miss Janet Flanagan), a woman of grace, wit and quiet force, to whom Mr. de Valera was married in 1910.

Throughout the trying years ahead the de Valera family circle was a united one, militantly so, for his children met the military raiding parties with angry cries: "You can take our father but you won't make us English!" There were five sons and two daughters of the marriage. The third son, Brian, died after a riding accident in Phoenix Park in February 1936. This fatality led to a widespread demonstration of sympathy with Mr. de Valera, for the depth of his feeling for his family is well known, and it was known also that between him and Brian de Valera there was an unusual bond of affection.

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Besides his work as teacher of Irish in the Dublin Gaelic class, de Valera also took charge of the Tawin Summer School in County Galway. It was founded by Roger Casement, whom he first met there. From this remote Western village a troupe of Gaelic-speaking players toured Ireland and the United States.

De Valera from 1913 played an even more prominent part in the Irish Volunteer movement as it swept over Ireland in reply to a movement the North had begun. Until then, indeed, de Valera had remained aloof from public life, comparatively unknown outside Gaelic League and academic circles, a profoundly religious and austere man, a non-smoker, and like his Irish-Ireland colleagues in general, a strong advocate of temperance, educational and industrial movements. Many moments of drama were to pass ere he became overnight the leader of the Irish people, to be worshipped as perhaps only Parnell and O'Connell had been worshipped before him. Hopes of Home Rule blossomed and faded, the Ulster and Irish Volunteers entered upon a competition of recruiting, drilling and arming, Bachelor's Walk succeeded the Howth gun-running, the European War succeeded Howth, the first clashes between Sinn Fein and the British Government made their appearance, but, unless you had happened to look into the pages of the *Irish Volunteer* just then, you would have found nowhere the name of de Valera.

He was not inactive. He had walked out of his study into the new movement and risen to Commandant's rank, appearing on public parades in the neat grey-green uniform and silver-badged cap of the Irish Volunteers. His mathematical mind was turned on the mysteries of military text-books. On the eve of 1916, Pearse, as

Director of Organisation, left the opinion on record: "Eamon de Valera: Eminently capable." Behind this terse phrase were these facts: de Valera's prominent part in the Howth landing of arms in 1914; his determined handling of an ugly moment at a great Volunteer review at Limerick in 1915, when showers of stones and hand-to-hand scuffles threatened to break the ranks and lead to rioting, but Pearse and de Valera succeeded in marching the hundreds of armed and exasperated men past their assailants in silence and good order; a responsible part in marshalling the huge O'Donovan Rossa Funeral procession in 1915. As the insurrection drew near de Valera was one of the best-known Volunteer Commandants in Dublin, and as Adjutant to Thomas MacDonagh one of the most important, so important that in the absence of Pearse or MacDonagh it was to de Valera that Eoin MacNeill as Chief of Staff, at a critical stage, had to send his orders to call off any movements in Dublin.

In his early stages as a Volunteer captain, de Valera was so much a stickler for historic precedent that he insisted that the good old weapon used by the insurgents of 1798 should not be forgotten, to wit, the ten-foot pike. According to the late Batt O'Connor in his memoirs of Collins, de Valera had his way in this. A section of men were armed with these after Batt O'Connor had obtained the long poles and the gleaming pikes, but the blistering curses of those who carried them and the hilarious jibes of the Dublin wits soon hustled pole and pike-head back to the scrap-heap. But there was always a clash between realism and romance in this new Irish militarism. Numerous poets filled the mosquito Sinn Féin and provincial Press with rhetorical effusions as

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solemn and out of date as de Valera's unhappy pikes, until an infuriated Dubliner lumped all the bards together in an extraordinary hotchpotch of their dearest lines and silenced them with the protest:

*Before we can walk straight in columns of four,
They make us warriors wading in gore. . . .*

Thus far the beginnings of Eamon de Valera. As he loses his beloved pikes thanks to Dublin wit and a hard world, and waits for the greatest adventure of his life, the World War goes on, and Pearse and Connolly and Clarke dream and plan: names only a shade less obscure than that of Eamon de Valera, leaders of the movement John Redmond says he could crush in the hollow of his hand.

And in a dusty little office in a Dublin side street, an unknown little man was writing, writing, writing. He edited a paper called *Sinn Fein*. His name was Arthur Griffith.



FOR Ireland as well as the world at large, 1916 was a year of turmoil, terror and transition, but in Ireland until spring there was quiet outwardly. Then as the German armies still hammered at Verdun through seven baffled months, as Kut fell, three months after the British withdrew from Gallipoli with many an Irish corpse behind, and two months before many another Irish corpse was added to the daily sixty thousand burials in the mud and blood of the Somme, the Easter Week insurrection broke out in Dublin.

Seven hundred men seized the General Post Office, the Four Courts, the South Dublin Union, Jacob's biscuit factory, Westland Row Railway Station, the College of Surgeons and other positions. Shots were fired at Dublin Castle and the Magazine Fort in Phoenix Park was attacked. Dublin was held by a ring of positions over which flew a new flag, the Green, White and Orange. An Irish Republic was proclaimed, and the fighting lasted five days. Before the end forty thousand troops encircled the insurgents and a circle of leaping fires and a desolation of machine-guns and shells and a waste of tumbled ruins.

On Saturday, April 29, there was an unconditional surrender of the insurgents. A long-drawn-out series of executions followed between May 3 and May 12, fifteen in all, including the seven signatories of the Proclama-

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tion: Thomas J. Clarke, Sean MacDermott, Thomas MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly and Joseph Plunkett.

There were one hundred and sixty sentences by courts-martial of many years of penal servitude, while over two thousand people were deported from all parts of Ireland.

It was known that there was German assistance behind the Rising. On Good Friday, Roger Casement had been arrested after landing from a submarine on the Kerry coast. The German arms ship, the *Aud*, carrying rifles and machine-guns to the insurgents, had been intercepted by a British cruiser off the Cork coast, and blown up by its crew.

Before the last of the executions, Mr. George Bernard Shaw wrote prophetically in a letter to the *Daily News* on May 10:

“Until Dublin Castle is superseded by a National Parliament and Ireland voluntarily incorporated with the British Empire . . . an Irishman resorting to arms to achieve the independence of his country is only doing what Englishmen will do, if it be their misfortune to be invaded and conquered by the Germans in the course of the present war. Further, such an Irishman is as much in order morally in accepting assistance from the Germans, as England is in accepting the assistance of Russia in her struggle with Germany. The fact that he knows his enemies will not respect his rights if they catch him, and that he must therefore fight with a rope round his neck, increases his risk, but adds in the same measure to his glory in the eyes of his compatriots, and of the disinterested admirers of patriotism throughout the world....

“The shot Irishmen will now take their places beside

Emmet and the Manchester Martyrs in Ireland, and beside the heroes of Poland and Serbia and Belgium in Europe; and nothing in heaven or earth can prevent it."

What lay behind this insurrection? A tangle of cross-purposes and a clash of policies and personalities. Some of its roots lay in Eighty-Two. Thomas J. Clarke, the young man of twenty-five who had sailed in that year for London with dangerous thoughts, had gone on hoping and plotting after his release from fifteen years in a prison cell. Away in New York, old John Devoy was still plotting as he had plotted in Eighty-Two. He knew that the Fenian organisation in Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood of which Clarke and Patrick Pearse were the guiding spirits, had resolved on a Rising during the World War.

On February 3, for all that, John Devoy was surprised to receive a message from Clarke and Pearse that the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. had decided on an insurrection on Easter Sunday, April 23; that they wanted a shipload of arms between April 20 and 23; that they could not expect the British Government to remain inactive much longer; that they intended to rise on their own, but would be grateful for any arms that could be obtained from Germany later. Devoy, who had approached every power that had ever been at enmity with Great Britain for half a century, the United States, France and Russia in turn, made no secret of his negotiations with the Germans. But he followed a fixed principle: military help he would accept but no money. This helped to make the Germans regard the Irish as hopeless visionaries, especially when Casement in Germany persisted in the same refusal.

Pearse's life-dream was to head an Irish insurrection;

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Clarke had dreamed the same dream through fifteen years as he fought for his reason in Dartmoor; Devoy worked on for the same object for sixty-seven years. And now these men encountered within their own ranks the opposition of Casement and Eoin MacNeill. For to the dream of an Irish insurrection with the hope of shaking British power so seriously that the British Government might be driven to make terms, but, in the last resort, insurrection during the war regardless of consequences, Casement and MacNeill opposed their own policy of building up an Irish Volunteer organisation during the war strong enough to safeguard Irish liberties until the Peace Conference. In this they had a determined ally in Bulmer Hobson, the Secretary of the Irish Volunteers. They only contemplated armed resistance in the case of an attempt to enforce conscription.

Against their policy also stood James Connolly, the Labour leader with his Citizen Army of two hundred men. He had joined forces with Pearse and Clarke and was almost reckless in his open advocacy of insurrection. So much so that the I.R.B. leaders kidnapped him early in January, extracted a promise from him to stop his propaganda, informed him of their plans, and persuaded him to wait. Until the end, however, they regarded his writings in the *Workers' Republic* as dangerous although they admired his ruthless spirit and will. Unfortunately for their plans, they sent a message to John Devoy that wrecked the Rising: they changed the date of the arms landing to Easter Sunday night.

Devoy had already communicated with Berlin and arranged for a landing in Kerry. The *Aud* had left, and, as the ship had no wireless, could not be informed of the changed plans. She sailed through the watching patrols

in safety into Tralee Bay, but getting no answer to her signals from the shore sailed out again.

In the meanwhile two things happened: Roger Casement landed from a submarine on Banna Strand in Kerry. He had come to urge the I.R.B. leaders to call off the Rising, as he thought the Germans were only using the Irish for their own ends. If he could not succeed in this, he was prepared to go down in the revolt. After his arrest on Good Friday, he smuggled through a message to Dublin in these terms. That evening the British cruiser *Bluebell* intercepted the *Aud* off the Cork coast. The Germans hoisted their flag, took to their boats and surrendered as a loud explosion sent the *Aud* under the sea.

British patrols had been watching for the arms ship. For United States Secret Service agents had raided the New York office of the German Embassy and seized among other things Devoy's message changing the date of the landing. This information was communicated at once to the British Government and a watch was kept for the *Aud*. If the Dublin leaders had not changed the original date for the landing the arms would have reached the insurgents and the plans for an All-Ireland Rising gone through.

The original plan of the Rising was a seizure of Dublin backed by uprisings in the South and West. This plan, already doomed, was finished by another hitch. Although Eoin MacNeill had some reason to suspect the ultimate plans of Pearse and Clarke, he had been kept in the dark until he learned of the plan early in Holy Week. As elected Head of the Irish Volunteers, he asserted his authority and taxed the I.R.B. leaders with deceiving him. When Casement's message and news of the sinking

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of the *Aud* reached him, MacNeill determined to stop the Sunday Rising at all costs. He hoped thus to avert any clash with the British Government and preserve his policy and organisation intact. His hesitations no doubt were due to a certain admiration for the spirit behind a plan described by James Connolly as "a leap in the dark" and by Pearse as so insane that the British Government would never suspect it. MacNeill now kept the I.R.B. leaders in the dark as to his own plans. He issued a sudden order calling off the Sunday mobilisation through a letter in the public Press "in view of the critical situation."

The result was confusion everywhere. Dublin Castle had already made up its mind that sufficient evidence had been received of "hostile association" between the Irish Volunteer leaders to arrest the leaders and suppress the organisation, but MacNeill's order threw them off their guard. The Chief Secretary's consent was obtained by the military authorities to the internment of the leaders early on Easter Monday, 24th. In the meanwhile, there had been a confirmation by the Irish Volunteer leaders of MacNeill's countermanding order, a conference of Connolly, Pearse, Clarke, MacDermott and MacDonagh at Liberty Hall in the early hours of April 23-24 and an insurrection in Dublin decided upon. The Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers was mobilised for a route-march at ten o'clock and orders rushed off all over the country to cancel MacNeill's previous message.

Even yet Fate jested with the fortunes of the Rising. While the Castle officials were still discussing the general situation, a shot rang out at the gates, a handful of Volunteers attempted to rush them and fire was opened from neighbouring buildings. Had the attack been

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seriously intended and backed by any force the Castle would easily have fallen. But the few soldiers on duty managed to close the gates and the attackers withdrew. The response to the mobilisation was poor. But over a ring of positions the tricolour floated for the first time for over a hundred years.

It is now time to return to Eamon de Valera.



IT is strange that, although the defence of Boland's Mill by de Valera was perhaps the one outstanding military action of the 1916 insurgents, it has never been told in detail, and stranger still that de Valera's own actions during that defence have been obscured in rhetorical generalities and a vague halo. Yet from his headquarters and outposts de Valera directed one of the most important achievements of the Five Days, inflicting serious losses on the attackers, holding up the reinforcements sent from England to suppress the outbreak and making his name as one of the most astute and determined of the Irish Volunteer Commandants. Francis Stuart in his sketch of de Valera quotes the saying of a British Colonel: "If all your commanding officers had had the ability of de Valera, the 1916 rebellion would have lasted at least three times as long."

Years afterwards de Valera himself declared that he had never felt so free in all his life as in those five days with a gun in his hand. He always retained deep down an affection for this maddest and noblest of all the adventures of Irish Republicanism, and felt he was most himself as a leader of the defiant stand of a few hundred with ropes round their necks under a storied flag nailed with a reckless calculation to the mast.¹ His heart, whatever doubts simmered in his brain, approved these

¹ See Appendix I.

Boland's Mill

tactics far more than the protracted and more immediately effective tactics of guerilla war, but again, characteristically, de Valera took care that his forlorn hope should run to rule and time-table. Accounts of the defenders of Boland's Mill depict him as fierce, self-restrained, careless of exposing himself and brusque to laggards and blunderers. Legend placed him, truthfully, at a loophole in the flour sacks firing until his barrel heated and the bullets sang over his head; or sniping a troublesome sniper who had picked off too many of his men from an ivy-mantled tower; or leading an advance along the railway line, revolver in hand, not too active for a short and fiery reproof for some fool under his command. His indifference to his own personal fate made the most lasting impression on all who met him at this time: he cared not whether the roof collapsed over his head, he was only concerned that better men than himself had been shot, and he expected only death.

De Valera dominated the scene with intense sleepless eyes in his grey-green uniform. He had not slept for a week. He stood up in a grim frame: in Boland's grey mill solid in its grey stone; machines silent and a waste of flour sacks; garbage afloat in the dirty waters of the canal without; outside a waste of slate roofs down the narrow streets of Ringsend with the idle tramlines curving past through the houses towards Irishtown, so close that a passenger could shake hands with the tenement dwellers: Beggar's Bush Barracks across the field and the troops inside peppered and held by his snipers: two men and a tricolour on the roof of the neighbouring distillery, while his scouts are telling the curious that hundreds of Volunteers hold the positions and more are coming—and loose tongues and hostile

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ears soon are telling the military just what de Valera wants them to hear.

He has not slept, and yesterday only MacDonagh himself had held him back from hoisting the tricolour over the mill and had come in a hurry to confirm the countermanding order which had thrown MacNeill and the British off their guard. The Third Battalion had been mobilised at 144 Brunswick Street, on the Sunday, but not all the men had reported there, for MacNeill's order had confused them. In the end a hundred and twenty men rallied to de Valera, but more had called on the Sunday; the house was stacked with arms, carbines, rifles, shotguns, and to relieve the tedium and suspense a concert was held while de Valera worked away in a small room at his final plans. Later he called for men to volunteer for night-guard duty and posted sentries in the front and rear.

In the morning de Valera, who had worked far into the night and snatched a brief sleep in his clothes, left before dawn with his aide de camp, Captain Malone. A small body remained in Brunswick Street ready to seize Westland Row Railway Station just down the road on the main route to Boland's Mill, ready when their officers gave them definite orders, for even yet, whatever the rank and file might suspect and expect, nothing definite was known.

It might be another rumour like that on St. Patrick's Day. Perhaps MacNeill might have his way. Perhaps the British would swoop at the opportune moment as they had always swooped on the very eve of the Irish insurrections of the past, and it would be the old story over again.

De Valera, brooding in the grim grey frame of Boland's

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Mill, knew better now. It would be a new tale for their children to tell, however tragic its ending and whatever its effect on the country. The tricolour floated over the mill and the distillery near by. There was a jagged breach in the walls of the gaunt stone walls through which his men had entered. Away in the distance shots were ringing and closer at hand. On the walls closer than the singing bullets sang the Proclamation of the Republic: "In the name of God and the dead generations, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom" . . . and other phrases more glowing than de Valera would ever use. But he is using more than phrases as he directs operations from the grey mill.

Away there in Westland Row a handful of his men have taken and held the station. They had dashed at the double up the sloping slip, a dozen in all into the station crowded with porters, passengers and holiday-makers. The porters thought it was a joke, and an angry young woman struck one of the raiders across the face. A zealous official rushed to the phone for the police, but one of the dozen men had already cut the wires. The station was cleared, soldiers unarmed, trippers and an angry commercial traveller, fat, squat and voluble, at the revolver's point. The signal-box was seized and guards placed on the main gate. The attendants crowed over the raiders even when the place had been cleared, nice playboys, featherbed soldiers, they would change their tune when the real soldiers came along or the bobbies indeed, and then who would be seen for dust?

A Volunteer went up to the railway bridge and shouted out to the big crowd which had gathered, and where the fat and squat traveller still fumed and stuttered, that a Republic had been proclaimed and Ireland was now

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free. He spoke for several hours and as he spoke rumours spread among the audience: the Germans had landed, the Castle had been taken and there was a general rising throughout the country. There was a rattle of rifles away in the O'Connell Street direction and a nearer report of firearms. Bullets sang over the heads of the crowds outside the station and a stampede followed.

A sniper on Trinity had just missed the leader of de Valera's dozen as he listened to the hard-working orator on the bridge. Round the corner the clergy from St. Andrew's Church near by dropped into the station and heard the men's confessions with troubled faces. The priests left and went slowly towards O'Connell Street where the noise of rifle-fire and intermittent stampedes came on the wind to Westland Row.

Inside the dozen men built barricades with seats and slot machines. A solitary engine came in as evening fell, and the railway men went home bidding the small garrison a cheery good-night. Outside, the crowds swarmed round the barricades, and even when shots were fired in the air the crowds still grew and swarmed, some hostile, some curious, some sympathetic, but few came in to join the garrison. Between Boland's Mill and the station an officer dashed backwards and forwards, and though many bullets whizzed past him on his dangerous journeys none harmed him. At last de Valera told him to withdraw his dozen men from the huge station and join them in Boland's Mill, and they came in safety after the night of silence, broken only by the roar of guns from the quays, from the insurgent headquarters, from the South Dublin Union. Away in the dark waters of the Bay a heavy cannonade joined in the phantasmagoria of the timeless nights: a patrol boat, the garrison

thought, firing on some submarine, or signals of the great British Fleet sweeping the Irish coasts and waters for other arms ships.

The strengthening and completion of the inside defences went on feverishly within the mill and by Tuesday evening this task was finished. From the main great room with its cloud of white dust and many flour sacks, de Valera's Headquarters, the outposts radiated thence to the extreme ends of this circle of death and glory: to Landsdowne Road, to Westland Row Railway Station, to Mount Street Bridge and to Grattan Street.

Rumours, as in the other positions, spread among the small garrison. Civilians who spread the rumours de Valera had wished brought in the fantastic tales which then ran through Dublin: a German fleet in the Bay, risings here and there throughout Ireland, Irish-American landings, the fall of the Castle, an attack by the British forces with maxims on the Bank of Ireland. Over the hundred and twenty men loomed all the tense expectation of immediate attack by their enemies and there were constant alarms and calls to arms. Away in the sullen skies bright streaks of Morse flashed again and again. The snipers with their duels over the slates added to the deadly music of this orchestra of doomed desperation.

Outside in the narrow Ringsend streets and lanes between the rickety houses corpses strewed the pavements; here a child caught by a stray bullet; an old woman huddled with a loaf in her shawl; a rich citizen in a fur coat and a jagged red star in his forehead. And into the skies over O'Connell Street stole the first red glows of the circle which was to close in and doom the insurgent Headquarters.

Already the first surprise of the insurrection was over

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and the preparations to crush it well ahead. Powerful reinforcements were hurrying to the few thousand British soldiers who still held Dublin, from the Curragh, from the North and from England. But in this the garrison of Boland's Mill and de Valera had already seen to it that the path into Dublin to the Republican positions was not to be undisputed. Soon after the glow of dawn on the Wednesday the insurrection was at its fiercest. The gunsboat *Helga* steamed down the Liffey and opened fire on the deserted Liberty Hall, and soon great gaping cracks showed in the Hall and adjacent buildings.

Inside Trinity College there was much military activity. A battery of four field-guns had already arrived from Athlone. Six volunteers from Trinity College O.T.C. ventured out to Butt Bridge within range of Liberty Hall, for Liberty Hall was to them the thorn in the side of the respectable folk of Dublin—those whom both Connolly and his inspirer Mitchel were wont to call “the canting fed classes”—the Castle bureaucracy and the Dublin police. Liberty Hall, “the centre of social anarchy in the land, the brain of every riot and disturbance,” was a curious target to miss once it was decided to use artillery against the insurgents. But the Dublin cobbles proved only sympathetic to the riff-raff, and two pickaxes, crowbars and two spades after half an hour's work were blunted and broken with only one stone removed for the trails of the big eighteen-pounders behind the College gates. The perspiring and weary workmen told the curious crowd that there was something wrong with the gas supply in Trinity and sent back for reinforcements. Soldiers of a sudden quietly lined up in the side streets and seized a corner house. The Brunswick Street gate of Trinity swung

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open and the guns were hurried down the same street, where de Valera's men had marched earlier, and fixed in whatever holes the volunteer workers had already prepared for the trails. The pseudo-workmen dropped their broken and damaged tools and formed themselves into a party to carry the ammunition to the guns.

The officers shouted impatiently, and there was a great stampede of the onlookers as the two guns opened fire on Liberty Hall. Every pane of glass in the neighbourhood was shattered and the crowd of Professors and students and angry Doctor Mahaffy within, who was storming that that scoundrel Pearse would make himself Provost of Trinity if his ravishers and cut-throats carried the day, felt the solid Elizabethan foundations shake under them. The military planted machine-guns on the tall red-brick tower of the fire station, on the Custom House and the Tivoli music-hall, and the Muse of History watching must have smiled in spite of the roar of machine-gun and rifle and the shells howling over the Republican fortresses. Some years would pass and that green dome of Gandon's fall to the onslaught of this now doomed Republican handful of an army; more years and this shabby music-hall on the quayside close its doors and reopen as the daily organ of that insurgent leader down beyond Ringsend in his Mill with the tricolour over it.

De Valera's actual Headquarters were in Boland's Bakery, some distance from the Mill itself; this building escaped any serious damage. As in the Post Office James Connolly moved from place to place directing operations and inspiring his men, so in Boland's Mill de Valera moved from point to point in the thickest and

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most dangerous scenes of the conflict: along the railway line, from barricade to barricade, from bullet-swept position to position, a tall, tense, inspiring, silent man except when some curt order or terse expression of indifference to the repeated warnings addressed to him by his affectionate and anxious followers escaped his tightened lips. "You are our leader, Dev.," urged one officer, "we don't want to lose you."

He shrugged his shoulders and said with that well-known gesture of his, a suggestion of indifference, cold impatience and courteous reproof: "We are fighting for Ireland!" And then with the obstinate stoop of his head familiar to all who had ever seen him in a football scrum, he bent his head and aimed his rifle across the sacks as the bullets hummed and zipped and cut grooves in the grey stone beneath the barricaded windows, as calmly as he had stalked and slain the rabbits on the Bruree hills, obedient to his conviction yet pacific at heart. Nor did he set as much value on his life as a rabbit's. Like all the great leaders of Easter Week, he had a compassion for the stricken city and the agony of the people, but had it been possible to ask him in that tragic hour what of the future of this devastated Dublin, he might have answered as Cardinal Mercier answered those who brought him news of the burning of Louvain: *nous rebâtirons*; or with the proud question of Pearse: "What if our dream come true?"

And this profound, selfless, implacable spirit inspired his command. The posts in this area were exposed as the week wore on to concentrated fire, but the daring and determination of the hundred and seventy men scattered over the Mill, the distillery, the bakery, the gasworks, a dispensary and the strategic points on the main Dun

Boland's Mill

Laoghaire Road led their attackers to grossly overestimate their strength. They held out long after the other strongholds had surrendered; nests of snipers; desperate handfuls at street corners defying the machine-guns and the slowly overwhelming pressure of their foes; splashing their medley of rifles, worn, antique and new, into the sweeping angry khaki waves; once in anger charging down upon a storming party with their crude bayonets and sending the attackers in a panic rout with a heap of rifles on the cobbles behind: munitions and nutriment for another hour of armed denial. Despite it all but twelve men were killed and some twenty wounded: one survived to be hanged some six years later, one Thomas Traynor, a working man, father of five children, caught redhanded with a revolver in his hand by the Auxiliaries as he ambushed them in this very area outside the gates of Westland Row Station in an impromptu ambush—an answer to executions in Mountjoy on a grey March morning. There, too, in this inferno of a Boland's Mill fell the gentle Peadar Macken, a philosopher with a slow smile, a house painter who had spent his life wandering round Ireland at his work from lonely lighthouses to the great cities, through any district when he found opportunity where he might catch some new phrase or dialect of the Irish language, twin enthusiasm of his with the Labour Movement, for he had been Vice-President of the Dublin Trades Council in his time; dark, thick-set, florid; stretched beneath a tricolour by a stray bullet; confessing to his comrades with his curious genial smile that he had gone to confession before he answered the mobilisation on that Easter Sunday: "I was talking to an Army chaplain," he said, "and he told me he had a lot of Irish scallywags in his regiment who would not go

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to confession before a great battle, and signs on it, half of the scoundrels surrendered to the Germans!"

The *Helga* steamed away from Liberty Hall with no good intentions for de Valera, but with the full intention of blowing him and his wild men into smithereens. This ex-police tub, once a patrol for the Fisheries Department, had been erratic in its aim at the empty walls of Liberty Hall; a loopline bridge had diverted its aim, but with a drooping fire and much ammunition the shots reduced several houses near the Hall and many windows to ruins. The gallant *Helga* hurled more shells in the direction of Boland's Mill, but its aim was again erratic and the distillery near by suffered most from its fire. (Again the Muse smiled: she knew the *Helga*, rebaptised the *Muircu*, and leading patrol boat of the Irish Free State, would dip the tricolour to de Valera yet; a butt of cartoonists and pursuer of French pirate trawlers!)

In the meantime one of the most amazing actions of all the Five Days was in progress. Early on Tuesday, de Valera's aide-de-camp, Captain Malone, and eight other men had taken up positions in corner houses on the main Dun Laoghaire Road into Dublin. These commanded Mount Street Bridge within easy reach of the fighting area, and past these the troops had been ordered to march after landing at Kingstown in spite of warnings. The British troops were greeted with cheers and flowers, but their officers feared a trap, rejected all warnings to take a circular route and marched ahead into the maddest and most reckless ambush courage and desperation had ever planned. Among these first contingents were the Sherwood Foresters, many of them raw recruits who hardly knew which end of a rifle was which, with hazy ideas of how to load the weapons that swung from their

shoulders, and only recovered from the shock of the news that they were not in France but in that wild country Ireland. They marched on in silence on the watch for the snipers reported among the roofs, but the sound of the O'Connell Street fighting had grown monotonous to them before anything happened. Then as they passed the quiet houses at the junction of Haddington and Northumberland Roads and Mount Street Bridge rose before them a shattering fire was opened in front and behind and many of the Sherwood Foresters were hit.

The first of the occupied houses was stormed with machine-gun fire and bombing parties; one of the two men holding it was killed; the second escaped to fight another day and aid de Valera to clear the Lincoln walls. Still these ludicrous but formidable fortresses held up the British troops. Wave after wave of khaki swept towards Mount Street Bridge and washed backwards to cover. For hours the roar of rifles and the sharp bursts of machine-guns went on on the main Dublin road. But seven riflemen held up the shaken and angry troops. From the barricaded windows of the two houses across the bridge they fired and fired and fired.

In after days a Tommy visited Dublin again and told the tale: he had lost his obfuscated brother at Mount Street Bridge, he had, but he didn't hate the obfuscated Shinnars for his obfuscated mug of a brother had gone up that obfuscated street and showed hisself. Amazing repetition of a Thermopylae with seven Dublin gutties for Leonidas, and another grim smile from the Muse of History, for here is romance and war in the best history-book tradition, and just below in Mount Street are several dingy lodging-houses, where in a not distant year there

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will be guerilla killings in the bedrooms on a Bloody Sunday, and quiet beyond on the bridge.

And yet perhaps the smile of history is not unkindly for all her foresight of blood-splashed sheets in dusty back rooms and riddled corpses in the hallways of the lodging-houses, for she can see a wounded man in one of the stony backyards holding back the Black and Tans with a crackling revolver in his fist so that his comrades can scale the walls, and General Crozier arrives just in time to save him from a rough passage to another world.

Across the bridge the khaki waves ebb and flow, and the rattle and bark of the rifles and automatics and machine-gun goes on, and half the British casualties in the whole Rising pile steadily up. At last the British forces give up the idea of taking the houses by direct attack; they open a terrific fire from the side with machine-guns and rush up a Gatling gun. Six shots from the Gatling and the rain of the machine-guns and the house bursts into flames with every barricaded window blown inwards. Three of the garrison are killed, Captain Malone lies dead in the flaming ruin, the house fills with flame and smoke, the troops rush forward and hurl grenades again and again. But through a small rear window three of the garrison make their way into the city to fight elsewhere.

Night again falls and the British troops sweep into Dublin, there is a circle of flame around the General Post Office, and de Valera watches inside the grey mill. The end of the Rising was in sight, for O'Connell Street was hemmed in by Maxwell's cordons, and a ring of machine-guns and heavy guns was battering a way through to the insurgent Headquarters. O'Connell Street was a bleak and bullet-swept desert, and as the

insurgents looked out from their posts the ruins mounted and the fires raged. Day and night the artillery hammered its way towards the heart and brain of the insurrection, and day and night the duel of sniper and machine-gun went on. And louder and nearer came the rumble of the great guns and closer and closer the khaki cordons strangling the very breath out of the centres of the Rising. High over it all flew the last three romantic standards of revolt ever to float in an Irish insurrection again, and louder and louder shrieked the shells in defiance of Connolly's prophecy that artillery would never be used against the insurgents.

Sir John Maxwell had already ordered his pit to be dug to bury the rebel leaders when he caught them, but his artillery was already burying something else: Irish romanticism and Irish slavery. For in this inferno of a General Post Office and Mount Street Bridge, and the South Dublin Union with Cathal Brugha riddled near to death, and in the grey mill beside the murky canal waters and the slums, and outside through Ireland hundreds of men and women were finding themselves even as the last hours of Pearse's dream and Connolly's iron despair ticked out their last seconds. Inside the General Post Office Michael Collins brooded and found himself; in the South Dublin Union, Cathal Brugha brushed death aside although seventeen bullets had found him; and in the grey mill de Valera found himself and Ireland found her leader.

It came at last, an unconditional surrender to save the capital and the citizens, but later came the surrender of de Valera. It was methodical and in form on Sunday afternoon, April 30, twenty-four hours after every other position. After due scrutiny and inquiry that this order

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“to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the City and Country will order their commands to lay down arms,” was indeed genuine, de Valera obeyed. The grey mill had never been stormed although the *Helga's* shells had starred its walls. An hour before, his eyes full of gloom and fire, he had said to a prisoner inside, half to himself: “Ah! If only the people had come out with knives and forks!”

At the end he was peremptory but not histrionic, for as the surrender parleys opened at the nearest military post, de Valera told the British officers:

“You may shoot me, but my men must be unmolested when surrendering.”

Then at the head of a hundred men, he marched off, half-hidden by steel and khaki, towards Richmond Barracks. Away in the distance a solitary sniper was still holding on. Desolation and ruin lay on every side. Here a waxen green or khaki form, there a woman in shabby rags, yonder some civilian, still in a bloody pool. Shell-fire and flame had consumed two million pounds. Five hundred British soldiers and R.I.C. men had fallen or suffered; two hundred insurgents lay dead and wounded, while at least four hundred civilian corpses were laid out for Glasnevin Cemetery alone. Amidst the stench of smoke and blood, in black despair and rumour-racked, the Dubliners and all Ireland cursed Sinn Fein. Over the gutted and shattered Post Office almost unnoticed a tricolour floated.

Boland's Mill

In all Dublin the flag of the lost Republic flew only in one other place; over the gutted and shattered distillery where de Valera had flown his tricolour by day and lighted by night to divert the guns of the *Helga* from his other positions. Some friendly eye noticed this second tricolour, a fugitive Volunteer perhaps, for in the night it was hauled down and brought to Mrs. de Valera.



AND now, though he too was in prison, Ireland listened to the Father of Sinn Fein, Arthur Griffith.

In the days before Sinn Fein became a magic word, Arthur Griffith was a god to a small circle in Dublin. When he lay in his grave, almost penniless, thoroughly disillusioned and heart-broken, but with most of his lifework accomplished, someone in Dublin spoke his epitaph: "He made us all." The terse epitaph was worthy of the man who had the sharpest and most potent pen in Ireland since Swift or Mitchel. He had written: "We want to take England's hand out of Ireland's pocket and England's hand off Ireland's throat." And again: "The Irish nation is built on bones and broken hearts."

With imperturbable hope and patience this shy, squat, strong-jawed, taciturn man had been saying the same things since Parnell's funeral. There was a fire in the man, for he horsewhipped a scurrilous editor who had insinuated that his associate, Maud Gonne, was a British agent and knocked down a Dublin corner-boy who had coarsely interrupted a literary discussion at midnight between himself and James Stephens, the poet. In the first case he went to prison; in the second he looked down on his prostrate interrupter on the Grafton Street pavement and resumed his literary discussion in the very middle of a sentence.

A Dublin compositor's son, born in 1872, he too had worked in his early years in Dublin at the case and then wandered off to the South African Rand where he found more hardship, heartache and illness than gold. The Rand Miners nicknamed him "Cuguan," the Dove—not for his gentleness but for his waddle as he walked—and this he used afterwards as one of his many pen-names. One memory dominated his political life, the day of Parnell's funeral, and two thinkers moulded it, the German List and the Irishman Davis. In 1899 he returned to Ireland and founded the *United Irishman*. It was the first of his many papers and the most important, for it became in its way the organ of the newer Nationalist movements astir after the dark night that followed the rancours and anti-climax of the Parnell split.

Griffith was modest and frugal in his life although he was intemperate where his little learned, witty, vitriolic papers were in question; to keep these going he would have sold the coat off his back and the carpet under his feet. Except with his closest friends he was taciturn and reserved. His enemies could say little against him except that he was the most tenaciously remorseless propagandist of his day and that he was jealous of an equal in his own party. The charges were plausible at certain stages of his early struggles and less true thereafter.

For fame he cared nothing and for personal comfort less. Irish and American editors tried to buy his pen with tempting offers, but he stuck to his little papers, and when banknotes came his way there was a danger that he would lose them among the dusty heaps of papers on his desk. He knew everything about the history of Dublin, a choice variety of verbal barbs spat and whizzed from his pen for over a quarter of a century, and when

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the Dublin poets and intellectuals who had promised him copy failed him he just wrote what he had asked them to write himself and never reproached them. It was a deep quality in him never to forget a friend no matter what kind of a scallywag that friend might turn into, unless he went over to the enemy politically, and even then Arthur Griffith only threw his verbal barbs after him, but in private remained courteous and at the worst silent. For years he went on saying the same things, one against all but a small minority in a nation, but so biting were his words that the triumphant Parliamentarians never forgave or forgot them.

No less than de Valera was Arthur Griffith the slave of duty and principle. There is ample evidence that he disapproved, indeed detested, the guerilla war, the large-scale hunger-strikes, the bloody excesses of the final stages of the Anglo-Irish conflict, but except—as P. S. O’Hegarty records in *The Victory of Sinn Féin*—to intimates in an occasional phrase no hint of this escaped him. The 1916 insurrection changed him for the better and the worse. Before that upheaval, which he tried to stop, did not participate in, and never approved (beyond a last-minute consideration of an appeal signed by him and other moderate leaders to the country to support the Rising), it was a just criticism of him that he was narrow-minded, autocratic, carping, and the biggest obstacle to the success of his own movement. The brilliance of his *Resurrection of Hungary* burned in vain and his movement fell away into a sect. He antagonised the growing Labour movement by his bitter misrepresentations of Larkin and the 1913 lockout. “Sinn Féin,” said Tom Kettle of the Griffith of this phase, “is as bitter as it is barren, and as barren as it is bitter.” If

Griffith afterwards had cause to regret the bitter anti-British racial hatred of some of the Irregular militants who broke his heart, he was only reaping what he himself had sown in his pre-war period, for at his worst he preached a narrow racial cult and a cult of hate. He built up a Frankenstein in the Irish imagination: England the robber, the bully, the trickster. He even extended this for all his invocations of Thomas Davis to individual Englishmen as such. He was capable of refusing an Englishman a hearing at a Sinn Fein meeting on the sole ground that he was an Englishman. This kink blinded his judgment of Erskine Childers. This led him to insult publicly one Mr. Dudley Edwards, who rose to speak in December 1908 at a lecture by W. P. Ryan on "Has Sinn Fein a Serious Social Policy?" The lecturer thought not. Mr. Dudley Edwards rose to agree and met a lowering rock in the person of Arthur Griffith, who said that no Englishman should speak in that assembly while he was chairman. This was merely a flourish of the period, but a disciple of Griffith who ought to have known better, George A. Lyons, in his *Reminiscences of Arthur Griffith and His Times*, makes this incident even more gross than it was by translating Mr. Dudley Edwards, a respected Civil Servant with no political affiliations, into Mr. George Lansbury barred out from a Sinn Fein Convention by a high-souled Griffith at a post-war Sinn Fein Convention.

But long before the first post-war Convention of Sinn Fein, the tragedy of the World War and his experience as a national leader had deepened and mellowed Arthur Griffith's outlook. It is only just to him to say that his fiercest outbursts and most skilful misrepresentations of his political opponents were all impersonal, and even in

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his propagandist stage he had few enemies, and, as his close friendship with and public applause of James Connolly proves, he could appreciate greatness in those in another camp even when his own personal principles and prejudices were aroused by the blackest political or social controversy. Once he wrote a very generous obituary of a persistent critic of himself, Fred Ryan, and added that such as his late critic were the saviours of the world, even when their onslaughts blew off the hats of the just as well as the unjust.



OUTSIDE Westland Row Railway Station on Monday, June 18, 1917, great crowds waited under the tricolours to welcome de Valera and the others released from penal servitude to restore a proper atmosphere for the Irish Convention that Mr. Lloyd George had set up to impress the Americans, that Sinn Fein had refused to enter because of its non-elective character and limitations imposed on its findings, but about which its friends spread the most rosy rumours. Less rosy rumours had for some time past been circulating through Ireland about the conditions of the Easter Week prisoners. Sinn Fein had won the Longford election in May on the cry "put MacGuinness in and get his comrades out!" It was known that there had been turbulent and prolonged jail strikes and that de Valera was the leader of the prisoners. So the great crowds waited to see the man other cheering crowds were even then greeting at Dunleary.

The legend had taken root. De Valera had vanished behind the stone walls with stoical dignity. In Richmond Barracks on the day of his court-martial he had taken a calm leave of his friends and given away even his fountain pen and the last buttons on his tunic and said to Batt O'Connor with a last clap of his hands to imitate rifle-fire: "You know I am expecting that!" Although he felt bound in honour to obey the call to arms, de Valera never concealed his doubts as to its wisdom on

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the eve of that enterprise in which he had played such an outstanding part. In Richmond Barracks, he candidly said he was glad he had only to carry out his orders and not vote for or against. Then he was snatched from death. The general belief was that Spain and the United States had spoken an unofficial word on his behalf; and by some it is claimed that John Redmond had a share in this reprieve.

In prison, de Valera became leader of the men in Dartmoor by virtue of his rank in the Irish Volunteers. He gave the prison authorities more than they expected, and he with some others was transferred to Maidstone Prison. They had to wear prison clothes and do convict work. Eoin MacNeill, whose counter-mobilisation on Easter Sunday had prevented an All-Ireland Rising, was also sent to serve a life sentence in Lewes Prison where all the Easter Week prisoners were next sent and allowed some slight ameliorations. De Valera ordered the men to salute MacNeill. From that on, de Valera was the centre of a struggle with the prison authorities. An agitation for amnesty grew outside.

Henceforward the lot of the wardens of de Valera and his comrades was unenviable. Within the prisons there were stormy jail strikes which left the buildings with tunnelled walls, shattered windows and sagging doors. In vain were de Valera and other leaders of the prisoners taken from jail to jail, sometimes in chains. The fight went on. In vain the warders tried to calm the prisoners by assuring them that de Valera had been removed with a chosen few to the company of "professional gentlemen." It was discovered the gentlemen mentioned had been guilty of several crimes only to be expiated by fire from Heaven or a long drop.

The Legend Grows

De Valera during these struggles was once ordered to stand up and salute an over-zealous Governor. He refused and remained seated on his prison stool. As the warders approached him to compel him to obey, he swept them aside, strode across to the astonished Governor and looked him full in the face:

"Please understand," he said, "that I have as much contempt for a bully when I am standing up as when I am seated."

At last a general amnesty and release was ordered, and the great crowds waited outside Westland Row Station for the man who had already become a legend. At nine in the morning there was a wild cheer and the great human wave swept aside the police barriers and swarmed round de Valera and his companions as they drove through the city in brakes. Through a storm of cheers and the frenzied waving of the Green, White and Orange, he looked down on the great crowds, sad-eyed, close-cropped, a dark profile over the cheering crowds and marchers, amid the universal strains of the "Soldiers' Song,"

*In valley green, on towering crag,
Our fathers fought before us.*

And truly Eamon de Valera had a tougher fight than any of his fathers before him. He had consented even as he crossed the Irish sea that morning to stand as candidate in the Clare Election. With some reluctance, for he had said to Dr. McCartan that he knew nothing about politics and did not like them. Dr. McCartan advised him to taste the new spirit abroad in Ireland, and went off to America. The Irish Party prepared to make it very hot for this daring unknown leader who was going down to Clare with only a romantic legend

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behind him and no experience in the game they had played for forty years.

The legend grew. From his release onwards the de Valera legend grew and survived even in an Ireland that five years of adventure, change and terror was to make callous. He had, apart from the respect and affection of the Irish people that he never lost, apart from the Easter magic and miracle, apart from his leadership in the prisons, apart from his sincerity and ability, other allies to perpetuate this legend, and to him it is evident his legend was as irksome and humorous a burden as Michael Collins's halo of mystery and melodrama was to Michael Collins. These allies were mostly inimical to de Valera: case-hardened headline-hounds and purple-patcher packs of special correspondents. This fearsome invasion of Ireland by the special correspondents proved the most terrible horde of invaders that ever plagued her soil. They mixed their ink with the mists of Ireland and the mixture went to the head of Kathleen Ni Houlihan. They did their damndest with de Valera, yawned at his speeches and plastered him with penny-dreadful paint and poses: de Valera against blood-red sunsets or de Valera in torch-lit and sombre glens or de Valera surrounded by wild-eyed horsemen in mountain fastnesses glowering and raving about ten-foot pikes for hours. No wonder some simple if acidulous Duchess said the man ought to be shot and that if only he was a foreigner a merciful and mysterious Providence had dumped down into an impossible part of the British Empire he would be shot.

Mr. Lloyd George helped on the good work. Forgetting why God made little nations less crafty than the Welsh, he threw all peace proposals into the wastepaper basket and wagged a minatory finger towards the bloody

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sunsets and torch-lit glens and played to the British gallery and incidentally gave Mr. de Valera some very fine phrases to play the Irish gallery with in his turn. Mr. Dillon catherine-wheeled on platforms and in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* and asked his hecklers where they had been in Easter Week, and when they asked him where he had been in 1798 went on asking the same question. The Dublin wits were not impressed by the special correspondents or by Mr. Dillon. They chuckled, and in their chuckles many hard-eyed gunmen joined when a play appeared, a parody on a popular Abbey Theatre comedy by Lord Dunsany, *The Glittering Gate*.

The parody, *The Glittering Fake*, had two characters, Mr. Dillon and Mr. de Valera at the Gate of the Peace Conference. Mr. de Valera appeared, waved a ten-foot pike at Mr. Dillon and said reproachfully: "They say I want to start a new rebellion but I only want to start a new party." "That's getting near to Dev., eh?" said the wits to the gunmen, and quite forgot the end of the parody when Mr. de Valera forced open the Peace Conference Gate with his ten-foot pike and found nothing but the mocking laughter of the Great Powers and a sad "I told you so!" from Mr. Dillon. In spite of all the dramatic election hustings and the more fiery but always qualified parts of his speeches there was a very well-founded suspicion that Mr. de Valera was less headstrong than the Duchess, the special correspondents and Mr. Dillon were inclined to believe.

His speeches, indeed, if read with care, contradicted the legend. They were involved arguments starred with qualifications and puzzles. At times, a biting phrase would flash out. He would say England had a million good arguments against the Irish case and each argument

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carried a bayonet. There was always a sting in his most rhetorical flourish, even in his famous ten-foot pike over which the critics tripped with shouts of joy. But he had only dressed up a familiar Sinn Fein argument when he said that the Irish too had their conscientious objectors, mighty conscientious objectors who knew that even a ten-foot pike would be more effective against conscription than the votes of the Irish Party in Westminster. But in general, Mr. de Valera's arguments were and are only rarely embellished by these ornaments. He is capable of fire and eloquence, but always more concerned to develop an argument, sustained, logical, adapted to many circumstances but remarkably consistent.

Nor again is he the doctrinaire his enemies would see in him. When he said, even as he urged the rejection of the July proposals in 1921: "We are not Republican doctrinaires," he spoke the truth. It was not the phrase of a trickster about to sell out, as many over-eager Irish and British politicians too rashly concluded. Again and again in de Valera's speeches there is this weighing and groping towards the honest and careful minimum.

But Mr. de Valera, even as the legend grew, had an even harder task than saying nothing at length and yet inspiring his audiences with his ideals.

"Who else but Eamon de Valera could have kept Arthur Griffith and myself together?" asked Cathal Brugha with a grim humour. The task is phrased more formally in the amended Sinn Fein Constitution of 1917:

"Sinn Fein aims at securing the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Republic.

"Having secured that status the Irish people may by referendum freely choose their own form of government."

The Legend Grows

“I had,” de Valera told Dáil Eireann in 1922, “a difficult task to play for four years . . . to hold the balance even in public discussion, no matter what my own personal views might be; and privately, and certainly in public never did I do anything which would tend to lead to the disruption of these two forces. I felt that the unity of these two forces was absolutely essential for national success; and until the sixth December I succeeded in my task.”



THE people of Clare have a proud tradition in keeping with their independent and almost insular character. They glory in their title of the Banner County and tell you the Elizabethan land-grabbers had a short run with them and any other imitator since. Their fidelity has always gone to the pioneers of national and social freedom: to O'Connell, Parnell, Redmond and de Valera in turn. When de Valera won an overwhelming victory over the Irish Party candidate in 1917 his position as Irish leader could be no longer in doubt, another ray streamed from his romantic aureole. It was, however, no easy victory snatched by emotionalism from a sentimental electorate. The issue between the Irish Party and Sinn Fein was far from decided; the victories of the rising party had so far been won by narrow majorities; the Irish Party still dominated the public life of the country backed by the Press, nearly all the Bishops, a majority of the older priests, the wealthy classes and the very tenure of power; above all, the ideals and ultimate goal of Sinn Fein were obscured by rhetoric, the fear of change, the desperate hope of a constitutionalist victory even yet and the deep, if hidden, cleavages in the leadership and rank and file of the new movement.

In Clare itself, the Irish Party candidate, Patrick Lynch, K.C., had powerful local connections and the

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full force of the Irish Party machine behind him, while de Valera had not even the monopoly of an emotional appeal: Clare had been represented by John Redmond's brother who had fallen fighting in France: William Redmond, universally esteemed and loved. De Valera was unknown, apart from his Easter Week leadership, and even that the great name of Redmond might well have outshone.

The election was a test of strength between two efficient machines, between youth and age, between the recrudescient militant tradition and the waning constitutionalist one. But at an early date in the contest it was evident that the popular sympathy was with de Valera. And that he was to take the national leadership from Redmond even as Parnell had wrung it from the nerveless hands of Isaac Butt.

"We'll vote for the Divil!" cried the men on the roadsides to the picturesque motor-chariots of poets, warriors and Easter Week celebrities on their canvassing tours. The I.R.A. came out into the open and drilled outside the barrack doors and overawed the Hibernian batonmen of the Redmondites who had been very militant in the previous elections. Youth, too, was on de Valera's side and threatened to lock up any too peaceful parents with a weakness for Mr. Lynch, K.C.

Not that it was a walk over. Listen to the tale of the rout of the tinkers of Ennis, a last flash of individualism before the party machines ran smoothly, and tricolours waved, and the Volunteers ran the spectacle like a military review, and Mr. de Valera went on with his argument, and it was a mere question of counting votes. In a certain quarter of Ennis, now no more, there was a fiery and obdurate anti-de Valera nest which loved

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neither Lynch nor de Valera, but had very intimate affiliations with the British Army in France, and this nest occupied a strategic position across the main routes of the de Valera chariots touring the constituencies from the Ennis headquarters.

Shrill cries greeted one chariot in which a widow of one of the Easter Week leaders sat:

“Bring in your widows. There will be more widows before this election is over!”

From insults these realists passed to action and clouds of stones darkened the sky over the chariots of de Valera. Then was the joy of those tinkers and militiamen down to the last of all their seed, breed and generation changed to woe and panic. For from the rearmost chariot leaped a bald-headed hefty warrior with a stick in his hand thicker than a man's thigh, and he vowed he would single-handed drive those dirty fighters and their doxies and callets back to their lairs, and leave nothing but debris on the soil dishonoured by such a breed. And as he vowed, a cry went up:

“God save us all! It's the Scrapper!”

No idle boaster was the Scrapper, for his foes fled before him as he walked through them with dusty clouds obscuring their flight in scores and fifties and hundreds, and he shattered the window panes and scattered the fires on the hearthstones of the jibbers and stone-throwers, and he or she who tarried woke not with a sound breech or healthy skull. And thereafter the chariots of de Valera passed in peace and the Scrapper scrapped no more, for the tinkers kept civil tongues in their heads and the chieftains of the de Valera army an eye on the Scrapper.

And under a forest of tricolours and the shouting of

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slogan and counter-slogan the election went on and Old Ireland and New Ireland faced each other. Roscommon, victory . . . Longford, victory by a thirty-odd votes. . . . Clare . . . ?

De Valera's progress, from the time he stood out over the cheering crowds around the brake at Westland Row Station, a dark, spare figure with closely cropped hair, sombre profile and intense eyes, through Ireland down to the Clare platforms was a triumphal procession. Already he asserted his authority. He refused to go unless Professor Eoin MacNeill, unpopular with a section for his action in countermanding the Easter Rising, accompanied him. He suppressed an election poster of John Dillon as a hangman. To his aid came the whole resources of the rising movement. A whole army of the Clare Volunteers kept order during his meetings. Nor was he forgotten by the men who had followed him into Boland's Mill, for some of them walked the many miles from Dublin to Ennis. No election address was issued, but Mr. de Valera made it clear he would never go to Westminster if elected, and more than once he said he stood for the Republic proclaimed in Easter Week. More than once he appeared in Volunteer uniform, and the legend grew.

The Irish Parliamentary Party threw all their resources into the fight, but it was soon clear that the electorate was on de Valera's side, and it was de Valera's ashplant army that often protected Redmondite speakers and sympathisers from hostile crowds. John Dillon and a formidable band of orators fought a losing fight with ability and all the advantage of long experience. Much play was made on Spanish names, the hopes of the Irish Convention, the record of the Irish Party in winning

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material advantages for the people, while a rash barrister with many derogatory references to "the bould caballero" and the part played under the bed in Easter Week by his more moderate, and indeed by the majority of his supporters, came out with the prophecy:

*De Valera O, take care O!
When the poll they declare O,
You'll run like a hare O
From Quinn to Lahinch!*

But on June 23, even de Valera's own supporters were shaken by the figures of a two to one win as the figures were given: de Valera, 5010; Lynch, 2035.

De Valera now became not only the leader of the released Easter Week men but the leader of Sinn Fein, and, as his own words already quoted show, the link between Cathal Brugha and Arthur Griffith. And in this is to be found the vagueness of his speeches on the issue of self-determination as against out-and-out Republicanism, as the same statement also makes clear. Both Cathal Brugha and himself refused to rejoin the Irish Republican Brotherhood, as reorganised by Michael Collins and others, on religious grounds and because they held that the altered conditions had made secret societies unnecessary. This did not prevent Michael Collins and his followers from throwing all their influence behind de Valera at the Ard-Fheis of Sinn Fein. Arthur Griffith, although he could have easily won if the matter had come to a vote, stood down with the words: "In Eamon de Valera we have a soldier and a statesman."

Two days before, Mr. Lloyd George in reply to protests by Mr. Redmond about arrests of de Valera's supporters and repression had managed to agree in

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advance with Mr. Griffith and also to give another coffin nail to the Irish Party:

“Those who listened to Mr. de Valera knew exactly what he meant. Those who joined these processions and marched in military step and formed fours and put sticks as if they were rifles, had gymnastic exercises. All the drilling and the studying of the mechanism of guns meant that they don’t want to take half an hour to learn to fire them. At whom? . . . There was a lot of talk among Sinn Feiners that did not mean Home Rule. It meant complete separation and secession—Sovereign Independence. England could not accept that under any conditions. Sovereign Independence had never been claimed by Irish members.”

De Valera, however, dominated the Convention where twelve hundred clubs were represented. The delegates cheered Griffith loudly as he stepped down gracefully and elected him Vice-President almost unanimously. Mr. de Valera squelched an attack on Professor MacNeill by Madame Markievicz. It was noticed that any resolution backed by de Valera was adopted. Towards the end a delegate jumped up and delivered an eloquent panegyric in his honour. Before that he had made his Presidential address.

These were the more important points of Mr. de Valera’s address to the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis:

“It is a pleasure to me that my first duty should be to convey your thanks, and the thanks in your name, of the people of Ireland to those leaders who have brought this movement to its present position, when, rather than have voting between them, they retired in order that we might strengthen the new position which we occupy—a position in which we tell the world that

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we want no connection with England. The only particular value in having me here is this. In the contested election of Clare the people of Clare did me the honour of choosing me as their representative. I stood then for the policy which is the aim of the new organisation. That policy was endorsed by the free votes of the electorate of East Clare, and by electing me unanimously here, you, the people of Ireland, have endorsed the voice of the people of East Clare, and declare to the world that the policy which we put before the people of East Clare is the policy of the people of all Ireland.

“The Constitution of this new movement which you have adopted is one which it may be well to lay stress on. It says that this organisation of Sinn Fein aims at securing International recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic. That is what I stand for, what I stood for in East Clare; and it is because I stand for that that I was elected here. I said in East Clare when I was elected that I regarded that election as a monument to the dead. I regard my election here as a monument to the brave dead, and I believe that this is proof that they were right, that what they fought for—the complete and absolute freedom and separation from England—was the pious wish of every Irish heart.

“They said: ‘We know that it is the opinion of the people of Ireland. We know that in going out to fight the British Empire, small in numbers though we are, we are asserting to the world that Ireland is a nation, and that Ireland has never agreed to become a subject nation or a part of the British Empire.’ They said: ‘We know, and the people of Ireland know, that the people of Ireland are kept from expressing their views simply by the naked sword of England. England pretends it is not

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by the naked sword but by the goodwill of the people of this country that she is here. We will draw the naked sword,'” continued Mr. de Valera, still passionately quoting the dead, his voice growing more and more agitated and so harsh that it was hard to hear him amid the prolonged applause—“‘We will draw the naked sword to make her bare her own naked sword, to drag the hypocritical mask off her face, and to show her to the world for what she is, the accursed oppressor of the nations.’ These glorious men did what they felt they were quite justified in doing.

“They said: ‘What we aim at is the freedom of the people of Ireland. We are not a mere party here or a small section. We represent in our hearts the solid sensible opinion of Ireland, and if we are to win that freedom the first step in that battle must be to get the people of Ireland themselves determined to win it; and even though the first battle in that political fight might be a military defeat it will lead to final success.’ That has ever been in my mind their moral justification.”

Mr. de Valera then discreetly referred to the differences in the leadership and rank and file that represented the will of the whole people of Ireland. He had soothed the doubts and aroused the enthusiasm of the Left, who ever afterwards quoted this speech as evidence that de Valera was a hundred per cent republican, although some cynics among them marvelled at a certain elusiveness in the most rhetorical phrases.

“... This Constitution (of the reorganised Sinn Fein movement) that we are setting up says that we are striving to get international recognition for our Irish Republic, and there is an added clause to it which I would like to explain, that, having achieved that status,

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the Irish people may by referendum freely choose their own forms of government. . . . For this reason, that the only banner under which our freedom can be won at the present time is the Republican banner. It is as an Irish Republic that we have a chance of getting international recognition. Some of us would wish, having got that recognition, to have a Republican form of government. Some might have fault to find with that and prefer other forms of government. This is not the time for discussion on the best forms of government. But we are all united on this—that we want complete and absolute independence (applause). Get that and we will agree to differ afterwards. We do not wish to bind the people to any form of government. Some of my friends may have different opinions from mine on forms of government.

“This is not the time for that; this is the time to get freedom. Then we can settle by the most democratic means what particular form of government we may have. I only wish to say in reference to the last clause that there is no contemplation in it of having a Monarchy in which the Monarch would be of the House of Windsor (applause).

“We say it is necessary to be united under the flag under which we are going to fight for our freedom—the flag of the Irish Republic. We have nailed that flag to the mast; we shall never lower it. I ask you all to salute that flag, nailed to the mast, which we shall never lower—to salute the flag and in Grattan’s words to say, *Esto perpetua*.”

De Valera’s speech puzzled some of his more detached listeners. For it was, if read in cold blood, by no means a consistent one, while to the outsider it was not obvious

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where de Valera stood: with the followers of the more militant physical force tradition or with those who followed Griffith, with the Left or with the Right, with those who still hankered after a Dual Monarchy, in which case the reference to the House of Windsor was clap-trap, or with those who stood for a Republic, in which case the quotation from Grattan was but a sop to soothe feelings of the more moderate. Many admired de Valera for leaving everyone in the dark, including the British Government, and hailed him as a born leader.

The truth was that de Valera was now not only the supreme political leader but the military leader as well, for at a Convention of the Irish Volunteers he was elected President and Cathal Brugha handed over to him as Senior officer in the Army their headship. He was holding two separate movements together, as he believed that nothing else could bring success. Moreover, even in the movement he led and in the country at large, policy was in a fluid state and Sinn Féin in a minority.



DE VALERA succeeded so well that from the Sinn Fein Convention onwards a series of proclamations of Sinn Fein and Volunteer activities rained down from the British Government. Arrests, seizures of arms, deportations went on and the Irish Convention still debated in Trinity College. De Valera became one of the hardest-worked orators in Ireland, and his speeches were a blend of defiance and argument: "We will not be frightened by talk of poisoned gas, tanks and armoured trains. We know only one limitation and that is—that is that our methods shall be in accordance with moral justice." Or "if we do not succeed, we will pass on the fight as a sacred duty to those who come after us." But he skilfully rang the changes on President Wilson's self-determination encyclicals and the Allied Powers' professions of love for little nations, and for the moment the loud demands from Tory Die-Hards that he should be locked up were ignored.

And the Irish Convention went on talking, the Irish Volunteers went on drilling and the Labour movement threw all its support behind Sinn Fein with just a friendly frown on de Valera when he made the declaration: "Labour must wait." Considering his over-time as an orator, de Valera made very few slips. His most unfortunate one was made towards the end of 1917 at Athy when he, with a qualification, made the much-

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quoted reference "to blasting Ulster like a rock from our path." It was regarded even in Sinn Fein and Irish Volunteer circles as unwise, since de Valera had no means of carrying out the threat. Nor, indeed, had he the wish, if his speeches, as a whole, at this time are re-read. His rhetorical echo of those who afterwards twisted his words against him in no way represented his attitude to Ulster, as his speeches as a whole will show. Fiery persons who from force of habit in these years declaimed about "Carson and his crew," "making Ulster swallow Home Rule though it were gall and wormwood to every Ulsterman," and "Give us war in our time, O Lord!" to-day rake up this solitary sentence. They are welcome to it. "Ulster" in any case in those days was not the greatest of Ireland's provinces, nor yet the claim of North-East Ulster for its own autonomy and right: it was a dark-browed Southern lawyer, backed by the power and wealth of the British Tories and intriguing British Field-Mmarshals with the cynical standard over their heads: "*We* will not have Home Rule for any part of Ireland." And few Irishmen to-day can read the life of Redmond, the life of Carson, and the diaries of Sir Henry Wilson without exclaiming: "Thank God for Patrick Pearse!"

Mr. Lloyd George, however, was meanwhile waiting for the report of his Convention, the entry of the United States into the World War and winning himself a place in history. The struggle wore on in Ireland throughout 1917 with rumours and alarms and ebbs and flows in the fortunes of the new movement. De Valera defined his attitude to the Irish Convention: "As far as the Irish people are concerned, we told them it was a trap, and we refused to walk into the spider's parlour.

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... Sinn Fein, has ignored the Convention, but she has not set to work to smash it. ... If anything comes out of the Convention which will further the cause of Irish freedom, we have never said we will refuse payment on account unless it is intended to keep us out of our whole bill. So long as we are not asked to give up our principles, when we have a bird in the hand, we will consider it a bird in the hand, mind, so long as it does not put a boundary to the march of the Nation." It is worth noting de Valera used almost the same words in his speech against the 1921 Treaty. But de Valera was doing more than this whole-time task of talking: he held the balance between the Right and Left; he stamped his passion for detail on the many departments of Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers; and he led the movement through what now seemed to be a decline of its fortunes.

For after Mr. Cosgrave's election at Kilkenny in August 1917, Sinn Fein was beaten at Armagh and Tyrone. Early in 1918, the Irish Convention dissolved and presented several admirable reports to Mr. Lloyd George. But America had entered the war, and John Redmond was dead, and the Irish could, as usual, not agree. So Mr. Lloyd George dropped a tear in the grave of Redmond and prepared another grave for Mr. Redmond's party. He brought in Conscription and the impossible Irish agreed for once, or as well as they could. De Valera, Griffith, the Labour representatives, Tim Healy and William O'Brien sat side by side in the Dublin Mansion House with John Dillon and Joseph Devlin who had left the British House of Commons with their party. And behind them, they left Mr. David Lloyd George, as pertinacious in his argument as Mr. de Valera, and unkind:

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“The character of the quarrel in which we are engaged is as much Irish as English, and the Irish representatives voted for the war, and Ireland through its representatives, without a dissentient voice, committed this Empire to the war.”

And Arthur Griffith, who for twenty years had hoped to empty the Irish benches with the verbal barbs that spat and stung, said, on the eve of his victory, that as ever England had no statesmen big enough to set Ireland free, even though Ireland free must always in her own interests stand beside Great Britain against any aggressive Great Power spreading westwards, but, no, “England has only great little men, great little men who think the gallows and the jail and the firing squad can convince the intellect and tame the heart of a proud and ancient people.” But this shy, squat, strong-jawed, taciturn man’s eyes twinkled just after he wrote that, for he heard Mr. John Dillon was going round and telling everyone that Mr. de Valera was a nice-mannered, well-intentioned young man, who yet under proper guidance might be taught sense, but that scoundrel Griffith was impossible, worse than ever, the real leader of the Left Wing. Then he set his jaw and reached for his pen again since Mr. Dillon and Captain Redmond were preparing to fight Waterford and win it, and Mr. Griffith softened no adjectives to their shorn fleeces. And when he had time returned to the British politicians: “the caterpillar changeth but the crocodile changeth not. They will all weep for the wrongs of Ireland—in the century before!”

In the meanwhile Lord French had arrived and all the waiters at the hotel he honoured with his presence were very polite to him, except on the day of his arrival when

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they stuck their heads out of the windows and cried: "Up the rebels!" He issued a very fine Proclamation, but the barber who shaved him told him the people were not impressed, and after a while Lord French told the barber that perhaps the people were right. Then it was announced that the British Government had discovered a "German Plot," and Lord Wimborne, who had been replaced by Lord French, was very surprised to hear that. And the Dubliners shrugged their shoulders and said any of them could have faked up a better plot than Whitehall and Dublin Castle between them, documents and all.

On the night before, May 17, there had been a swoop on all the Sinn Fein leaders in Dublin and through the country. De Valera was arrested that night as he reached Greystones Station. Arthur Griffith and the Standing Committee of Sinn Fein were all arrested and some Volunteer leaders. But Michael Collins cycled past his particular raiding party and on to a friend's house. The raiders were just leaving this house, so Michael Collins waited until they had gone and spent the night there in safety.

But before de Valera disappeared, he had rallied the nation, settled the differences between the advocates of passive and armed resistance and won over the Catholic Hierarchy to stand behind the national resolve. He had held many conferences with the Irish Volunteers and the Labour representatives. There had been an almost unanimous One Day General Strike of protest all over the country.

As he walked down to the mail-boat, through an avenue of rifles, some onlookers recognised de Valera and asked him for a message. He smiled and called out:

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“Be calm and confident.” As de Valera vanished the youth of Ireland sang a new song with a spirit and a will:

*We'll set Ireland free from the sod to the sky on you,
There's a surprise for you, David Lloyd George!*



ON the evening of February 3, 1919, de Valera and his companions were waiting in an upper storey of Lincoln Jail for the signal from below in the fields that Michael Collins and Harry Boland and the rescue party had arrived outside. Much had passed since de Valera's arrest and deportation: the World War had ended, Sinn Fein had conquered Ireland, and on January 21 Dáil Eireann had met in the Dublin Mansion House, adopted a Declaration of Independence, a Message to the Free Nations of the World and a Democratic Programme. De Valera himself had not only been re-elected for East Clare, but he had defeated John Dillon in East Mayo. Sinn Fein now ruled Ireland and openly defied the British Empire, now victors of the World War.

It was a gesture that thrilled the heart of de Valera and he chafed behind the prison bars. But to the late William O'Brien he confessed certain doubts of the proceedings of the first Dáil. In his book, *The Irish Revolution and How it Came About*, O'Brien claims that de Valera told him in August 1922, that is when de Valera was in the field against the Free State: "He was from the beginning opposed to any oath of any kind being taken. It was whilst he was in prison the first Dáil began by swearing allegiance to the Republic, and at the second Dáil they had to follow the precedent." Moreover he knew that there was the eternal struggle in

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progress between Griffith and Cathal Brugha, and that shots had been fired already down in Tipperary in the first ambush of what became known as the Little War. But de Valera had an even bolder plan: with the collapse of the Central Powers, he knew one hope remained for the Irish Republic: recognition by the United States. . . . At last a light flashed below.

Even while the Dáil was sitting the plans for de Valera's escape from Lincoln Jail were well advanced. So well advanced that Michael Collins had not attended the meetings of the Dáil, but had come to England to superintend the final details. The motive of the escape was to set the Irish leader free to speak on Ireland's behalf during the approaching Peace Conference. No other figure could make a world appeal or speak with such authority. The escape was planned and executed by Collins and backed by all the resources of the G.H.Q. of the I.R.A. In the Irish in Great Britain played an important part. It is already a great legend: the rope ladder, the three cakes, the three keys, the relays of motor cars, the last-minute thrills and alarms, the final touch and go.

When the final decision was reached communication was established with Sean McGarry inside Lincoln Jail. Sean Milroy, also a prisoner in the jail, was an excellent black-and-white artist. So a very subtle Christmas card had reached Mrs. Sean McGarry in which her husband was shown at his own house door very drunk and waving a key very minutely drawn and above it the words, Christmas 1917: he can't get in. Another part of the card showed McGarry in his cell with the legend: Christmas 1918: he can't get out. This card had been forwarded to the G.H.Q. which had a key filed to the

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pattern, but it proved too small when it arrived in Lincoln by a time-honoured method.

Soon after the pen-and-ink sketch had been translated into iron, the Governor of Lincoln had a visit from a modest and well-spoken gentleman who asked for permission to leave a cake for one of his misguided friends within, whose principles he deplored. The Governor was impressed by the visitor's correct but kindly attitude and gladly gave his permission. The visitor was turned over to a warder who was less impressionable than the Governor and glared when the visitor produced several parcels to be searched, and one parcel contained a finely baked and nicely iced cake. The warder had suffered much from war bread and he did not love the Sinn Feiners who were under his charge. He glared and spoke his mind and produced a large knife with which he proceeded to cut and stab the cake. Over his head was a warning notice that the penalty for any attempt to aid prisoners to escape was punishable by two years' imprisonment.

The visitor seated himself with resignation and listened with a half-amused, half-reproachful expression to the truly appalling language of the warder who continued to speak his mind about the injustice of the unutterable war bread for loyal long-suffering and God-fearing citizens and iced cakes for a pack of treacherous pro-German scoundrels. His visitor's tact and pleasantries were lost on the warder, who became more and more infuriated with darker and fiercer curses at every thrust. His visitor smiled and contented himself with reading the notice and odd attempts to draw out the warder. With every slice and oath the visitor felt sure the warder would strike the key inside.

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For the well-spoken gentleman resident in England with business interests mainly and no sympathy with his incarcerated friend's deplorable principles had come straight from Michael Collins and knew more than even the suspicious warder could have imagined about the inside of jails and the disloyal principles of his friends to whom he brought such well-cooked and infuriating cakes. He was Fintan Murphy, a member of the I.R.A. G.H.Q., who had fought in the 1916 insurrection and defied the British Military authorities to conscript him after a game of hide-and-seek which had turned Frongoch Internment Camp upside down. And he had seen, both as inmate and visitor, the inside of several jails. Moreover, in London, Michael Collins was even then waiting for news from Lincoln and arranging the next stage of the escape. Luck held, and at last Fintan Murphy breathed freely outside Lincoln Jail.

The cake and the key reached the prisoners, but though the key had been cut close to the design the key failed to fit. Other postcards sped to Dublin: a handsome Celtic design with the words *Eochair na Saoirse* (The Key of Freedom) beneath. Another cake, another visitor who was, however, spared a prolonged interview with the angry warder, another misfit. A letter was hurried to Dublin by a secret route but failed to arrive. Then the second visitor, Mr. Frank Kelly, who had been watching the jail for weeks and drinking with a stern sense of duty gallons of unutterable war beer with the warders in local pubs without any result or reward for his ruined palate and outraged principles, put Collins and Boland in touch with an influential local celebrity who had the right to visit the jail. Collins and Boland established communication on the spot with the prisoners and then the

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most temerarious and daring cake ever smuggled into any jail was packed with blank keys, files and key-cutting tools, baked and handed into the jail. It was heavy, but the gloomy warder was now resigned to cakes for the cut-throats and bore it, heavy though it was, with scarcely a prod or an expletive to the pampered traitors. Alderman Loughrey of Kilkenny settled down to work on the blanks and filed the real keys of freedom.

Outside the rescuers had a very awkward task. Military and petrol restrictions still prevailed and war-time suspicion of strangers was still rife. Complications came to precipitate the get-away plans. Joseph McGrath, afterwards organiser of the Irish Sweep, and a number of other Irish prisoners tired of Usk prison and walked out. . . . There was a hue and cry. Collins and Boland hurried on their plans and came at once to Lincoln. They expected a closer watch. A relay of cars was held in readiness from the prison to Worksop, from Worksop to Sheffield, from Sheffield to Manchester where de Valera's hiding-place was in readiness. Every inch of the route had been studied on ordnance maps; Fintan Murphy and two other trusted men were in charge of the relays; as a final touch Michael Collins tested the rope-ladder made by the Belfast I.R.A. and smuggled to Dublin.

Then came the swoop on Lincoln Jail. The jail was situated in the fields a few hundred yards outside the town. Soldiers and their girls were wont to court near the approach to the gate of which Collins, de Valera and the warders now all held keys.

On the evening of February 3, Collins and Boland came to Lincoln in a determined and desperate mood and loaded down with small arms, for they were prepared

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to fight their way into and out of the jail if necessary. They also brought an enormous parcel, drum-like in appearance, which contained the rope-ladder. The ladder had been carried aboard the mail-boat at Dun Laoghaire by another doughty lieutenant of Collins's, James Fitzgerald, who bore it under the noses of the Black and Tans on the ship who were in an ugly mood, for below there were four of their company in coffins. The time arrived and Frank Kelly went ahead with the parcel, heavier than the famous cake he had carried to the gates some days before. He soon reached the jail and looked up at the high back wall. There was a small impregnable double postern gate, and opposite a large emergency hospital for troops with a constant coming and going of soldiers. Facing the gates of the hospital was a five-barred gate which led through fields towards the postern gate. This point reached Collins, and Boland took the ladder and sent Frank Kelly away to scout over the roads and fields for gaps and less obtrusive exits than appeared on the plans already drawn.

Inside the jail all was ready for zero hour. At last Harry Boland took the lamp Michael Collins handed to him and flashed it. Away high up from a jail window came the answer, a spluttering and peculiarly vivid flare, for the prisoners ignited a box of matches, distrusting the feeble glow of their own flash-lamp. Outside the two rescuers moved quickly up to the gate, Mick thrust his duplicate key into the lock and turned it, but to his horror it stuck and then snapped, leaving one part in his hand, the other clogged in the keyhole. Collins groaned fiercely as at that moment de Valera, Sean McGarry and Sean Milroy came to the other side of the gate. Sean McGarry had already broken a key at another

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gate and de Valera's master key had opened it. Through the barred gate now rescuers and prisoners conversed in low tones; they could see each other dimly and all seemed lost. But de Valera prayed softly and smiled as he thrust the skeleton key which had already once saved them. Slowly he inserted it in the lock, met the broken key, pushed it out and then the gate swung open and they were free. There was no need of the rope-ladder, which was thrown down into the fields. Through these filed many wounded Tommies to the hospital. Many were grouped round the hospital gate and several were courting and in no hurry to return to their barracks. De Valera and the others did not wait for Frank Kelly to return with his report of less public exits, but walked boldly through the courting couples and the five-barred gate with an exchange of cheery "Good-nights." Harry and Mick went away and the escaped prisoners without mishap reached Manchester.



THERE was a great hue and cry. Ports were watched, there were rumours of de Valera's appearance in France, Holland and even the United States. The search spread to County Dublin within a week of the escape. Dublin was astonished even in that time of surprises. A Dublin Castle official took aside the special correspondents and whispered the search was all eye-wash; it was a subtle move; the extremists had grown restive; de Valera would be a restraining influence: so a paternal eye had relaxed its vigilance. The door had been not unlocked so much as the hinges oiled and the Irish left alone to plot, and what else could you expect but that the wild Irish and their milder leader would leg it. He would return to Ireland and give admirable advice to his hotheads. "Take it from me," said the official blandly, "that we let him escape. This is, of course, in confidence."

A colleague of Michael Collins's was told this and grinned sourly: "If they knew what was in Dev.'s mind," he said, "they wouldn't make jokes like that."

But the remaining Sinn Fein prisoners were suddenly liberated and the Castle officials shrugged their shoulders, and asked: "What did we say? It's nothing to us. We want no more play-acting."

They said nothing about the death of one of the internees, Pierce MacCann, in prison that sent up public feeling to boiling point.

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On March 22 the Sinn Fein Headquarters announced that de Valera would "arrive in Ireland on Wednesday evening next, 26th inst., and the executive of Dáil Eireann will offer him a national welcome. It is expected that the home-coming of de Valera will be an occasion of national rejoicing, and full arrangements will be made for marshalling the procession. The Lord Mayor will receive him at the gates of the city, and will escort him to the Mansion House, where he will deliver a message to the Irish people."

Dublin Castle was beside itself: a public reception to de Valera as President of the Irish Republic. It would call that bluff. The meeting and reception were banned by a military proclamation. The more militant spirits were all for going ahead regardless of consequences. No retreat seemed possible, and there was much talk about O'Connell's climb-down when his monster meeting at Clontarf was proclaimed, and the decline of the Repeal movement afterwards. But de Valera, who had not been consulted beforehand, threw all his influence against the reception with the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Fein. Finally, he formally notified the Sinn Fein Headquarters that he thought his home-coming hardly justified a formal reception, and it was abandoned.

De Valera was now re-elected President of Sinn Fein and at the Extraordinary Ard-Fheis in April, Arthur Griffith paid him this tribute:

"In that gentleman they had a man in whose judgment and rectitude they could absolutely trust. He knew that there was no man felt more embarrassed at hearing himself, as it were praised, but he wanted them to realise that in de Valera, Ireland had a great leader—a man who lived in thousands and millions of hearts, a man

with a wonderful judgment, such as he (Mr. Griffith) had never met in a young man, except in Parnell. Since Parnell's day there was not a man to equal de Valera, and he was sure in following and standing by him loyally he would bring the Irish cause to that goal for which many Irishmen in hopeless generations suffered, for they now lived in a hopeful generation." (Dáil Report, *Irishman*, Dublin, April 19, 1919.)

It was at this Sinn Féin Convention that de Valera and Griffith threw all their influence against any opposition to Proportional Representation that the British Government had now applied to Irish elections, Griffith because he had always advocated it, de Valera because "minorities had rights, and if the Sinn Féiners had the machinery of government in their hands they would give rights to minorities, but they would give no privileges to minorities. . . . He was not going to argue whether P.R. would benefit or be against Sinn Féin—he was in favour of the principle."

The Second Session of Dáil Éireann was also held in April and de Valera was elected President. The Ministry was reorganised. It was announced that a loan of £1,000,000 would be issued; £500,000 to be offered to the public for immediate subscription—£250,000 at home and an equal sum abroad. De Valera announced their policy on the League of Nations: "We are ready to become a constituent unit of a League of Nations based on the only principle on which a League of Nations should stand—the equality of right amongst nations great and small." He made a brief reference to his proclaimed reception: he was going to be received by the citizens not as a person but as a public representative. A couple of days ago the British-

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Irish Minister in the English Parliament referred to the "state entry of 'the so-called President of the so-called Irish Republic.' When the British Government issued a proclamation in Dublin proclaiming it, why was it a lying one, stating as it did, that the reception was proclaimed for 'fear of trouble in the City of Dublin'? That was the formal phrase in all these proclamations. These are the powers that are creating all the disturbances themselves, and were responsible for all the injuries and disturbances that have taken place in Ireland."

He made one allusion to the Labour-Sinn Fein alliance, and the Dáil Democratic programme:

"Everyone of us sympathises with Labour. We are perfectly aware that sympathy is not enough. And we assure everyone, we assure the Dáil, and we assure the Irish people that we are not simply going to sympathise with Labour, but we shall try, as Labour is trying itself, to better its condition."

The statement of ministerial policy was then read by de Valera. Its suppression was ordered by the British Press Censor. Apart from the statement of the Dáil loan it was as follows:

"Our duty," said de Valera in his address to the Second Session which was suppressed at the time by the British Censor, "as the elected Government of the Irish people, is to make clear to the world the position in which Ireland now stands. There is in Ireland at this moment only one lawful authority, and that is the elected Government of the Irish Republic. Of the other power claiming authority we can say—adapting the words of Cardinal Mercier—'The authority of that power is no lawful authority. Therefore in soul and conscience the Irish people owe that authority neither

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respect, attachment, nor obedience. . . . Towards the persons of those who hold dominion among us, we shall conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. We shall observe the rules they have laid upon us, so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our conscience, nor our duty to our country.’ ”

“ Our attitude,” he continued, “ towards the powers that maintain themselves here against the expressed will of the Irish people is to be this: We shall conduct ourselves towards them in such a way as will make it clear to the world that we acknowledge no right of theirs. Such use of their laws as we shall make will be dictated solely by necessity and only in so far as we deem these to be for the public good. . . . ”

At the Dáil Session de Valera also moved a resolution calling on the Irish people to “ ostracise publicly and socially members of the police forces acting in this country as part of the forces of the British occupation and as agents of the British Government.” This was a reference to the R.I.C. and the G or political detective division of the Dublin police. At the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis, de Valera also said: “ Regarding the Irish Volunteers, he had always held the same attitude as regards physical force. If he was a slave and if he had a stick, he would use that stick against the tyrant; he was not going to tie his hands behind his back, and he said that their last reserve was the Irish Volunteers. If the English Government were to keep him in jail until such time as he would renounce the Irish Volunteers, then he would die in jail.

“ The Irish Volunteers were now a national force at the disposal of the elected Government of the Irish people—they will obey that Government despite

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England's Army of Occupation—their attitude would be exactly that of the Belgians and the Belgian Government as defined by Cardinal Mercier."

De Valera now overbore what objections the Dáil Cabinet still made to his proposed mission to the United States. Collins gave up the attempt to dissuade him with the remark: "You know what it is to try to argue with Dev. He says he thought it all out while in prison, and he feels that the one place where he can be useful to Ireland is in America." Harry Boland was sent to the United States as his advance agent. Earlier in the year just after de Valera's escape, an Irish Race Convention had been held in Philadelphia. Five thousand delegates had attended. Resolutions were passed calling on the Peace Conference to hear de Valera, Griffith and Count Plunkett state Ireland's case in the name of Dáil Eireann. Three delegates, Frank P. Walshe, Edward F. Dunne and Michael J. Ryan, were instructed to proceed to Paris. Finally, Mr. Lloyd George signified his willingness that the Race Convention delegates should visit Ireland. They issued such a rousing report on conditions in Ireland and thundered such Republican sentiments at Dáil Eireann and led the police and military such a dance through Ireland that Mr. Lloyd George reconsidered his idea of letting them interview him on their return to Paris. President Wilson, too, however, fought shy of the arguments of the Race Convention delegates, that the resolution of Congress on March 4, 1919 should be acted upon and Ireland's case be placed before the Peace Conference by the American plenipotentiaries. He said that no small nation of any kind had yet appeared before the Council of Four, and there was an agreement that barred any such appearance unless

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the Big Four were unanimous. When it was urged on him that the Irish had faith in his word and were persuaded that his principles applied to Ireland, President Wilson could only say sadly:

“That is the metaphysical tragedy of the age.” He had previously refused to meet the Convention delegates in New York unless the Irish-American leader, Judge Cohalan, against whom he had a personal grudge, first withdrew.

Finally de Valera, having satisfied himself that the door of the Peace Conference was closed against him and that all was well with the Invisible Republic, prepared to depart on one of the biggest adventures of his life, and that he should even attempt it proved that his confidence in himself and his mission was great. But Wolfe Tone setting out to win Napoleon was nothing to the task of winning over the United States and their new Messiah, President Wilson.

Towards the end of May 1919 de Valera quietly vanished from Ireland, and rumours were immediately afoot that he was trying to make his way to the Peace Conference, then in its closing stages. He was in hiding in Liverpool until the middle of the following month when, disguised as a sailor, he was smuggled aboard a trans-Atlantic liner. He went aboard as a member of the crew, but before the ship sailed two seamen, lieutenants of Michael Collins, smuggled him into the hold and looked after him as well as they could until he arrived in New York just as the defeated Germans announced to the world that they would sign the Versailles Treaty. The news was flashed to Collins in Dublin by cable and Harry Boland announced his arrival to the American Press.



LONG before Eamon de Valera landed in New York after a voyage as a stowaway in a rat-infested hold, another great Irishman had made a biting epigram to summarise Irish-American politics: Saint Patrick, said James Connolly, banished all the serpents from Ireland, but they swam the Atlantic and their children became Irish-American politicians. In this phase of de Valera's career there is a tangle of romance, controversy, argument, achievement and above all, the serpents hissing and twining around Saint Eamon.

Many severe, petty and ungenerous things have been written and spoken about de Valera's American mission, but there is no episode of his whole life which is more creditable to him to-day. He went with only his honesty and his record to obtain three things: recognition of the Irish Republic, publicity for the Irish cause and financial support. In the first he failed and in the other two he succeeded.

In spite of his American birth, citizenship and connections, de Valera was a stranger to American political conditions, and his chief difficulties were due to this.

During the stormy debates on Mr. Cosgrave's Public Safety Act in 1931, Mr. de Valera took the occasion to deny with great emphasis the facile taunt that he stayed

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away in the United States in safety during the Black and Tan Terror:

"I was not in America. I came over at the beginning of the Black and Tan Terror and I stayed in Dublin during it. . . . He had given facts time after time to prove that his mission in America ended naturally with the election of November of that year, that he made preliminary preparations for coming home when he read in a newspaper that the Acting President was in prison. His coming home coincided with the severe part of the Black and Tan activities, and as he was coming across he was informed by a wireless message of the burning of Cork.

"I defy anyone," he said, "to say I neglected a single atom of my duty . . . because even though there has been a long slavery of our people I don't think that personal cowardice is a fault of ours." (*Irish Press*, October 16-17, 1931.)

De Valera's arrival was awaited with some misgivings by Dr. Patrick McCartan, I.R.B. envoy to America and official representative of the Dáil in the United States. McCartan had been conducting a campaign for recognition of the Irish Republic with tremendous energy and skill. His uneasiness was due to interviews after the Lincoln Jail escape in which de Valera had clearly committed himself to "self-determination." In reality, de Valera's statements were no more self-contradictory than the new Constitution of Sinn Féin. He had only said: "Let self-determination be applied to all Ireland, and if the people don't declare for separate independent statehood, then we shall be silent."

"I was making preparations," writes Dr. McCartan,

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“for sailing when de Valera arrived suddenly in New York, about June 11, 1919. He had come as a stowaway. Ship rats had eaten into the bundle of clothes in which he had intended to come ashore. He was smuggled from the ship into Mellow’s room on East 39th Street. Some ready-made garments were bought for him by McGarrity, who, after de Valera had visited his mother, took him home to Philadelphia.

“We kept secret the manner of his coming. His arrival when announced, created a great sensation, and the mysterious ease with which he had eluded the British added to the popular interest in him. . . . Nothing was lacking to make him a popular hero. And America was eager to see him and to do him homage.

“My report to him had scarce begun: I had just told him Cohalan had tried to reduce our claim for recognition to a claim for self-determination. ‘Self-determination,’ he said decisively, ‘is a very good policy.’”

But the Republican air of the United States and the determined lobbying of McCartan and McGarrity soon produced a subtle change: they persuaded the Convention of the American Federation of Labour to adopt a resolution calling on the U.S.A. Senate to secure a hearing for de Valera, Arthur Griffith and Count Plunkett at the Peace Conference and that Congress should recognise the existing Irish Republic. Mr. de Valera had prepared a Press pronouncement with self-determination for theme, and in arguments with McCartan and McGarrity had insisted that he was not President of the Irish Republic but only President of the Dáil. But on June 23 after the Labour resolution

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de Valera satisfied himself and everyone else by issuing his first public statement in these terms:

“From to-day I am in America as the official head of the Republic established by the will of the Irish people in accordance with the principle of Self-Determination.”

Later the same day he attended a reception in the Astor Gallery of the Waldorf-Astoria and thanked the fifteen hundred guests for the assistance America had given to Ireland. Judge Cohalan presided and asked the guests to file past and shake hands with President de Valera. McCartan records that it was an ordeal to de Valera, who said as they drove away, rubbing the back of his head and laughing:

“I wonder what Griffith will say when he reads that I came out in the Press as President of the Republic?”

It must be remembered that Dr. McCartan saw everything through the glasses of doctrinaire Republicanism and that he had not the responsibilities of Mr. de Valera. His fairness as an eyewitness of the de Valera mission has, however, never been questioned, although his criticisms have been vigorously challenged by de Valera's supporters.

The American Mission was in the tradition of Tone and the United Irishmen. Through Michael Collins's secret route passed many Irishmen to the United States: Dermot Lynch, Liam Mellows, Dr. Patrick McCartan, Harry Boland and others less known, a constant stream of emissaries who endured hardships in the holds and engine-rooms of the liners, often a struggling existence in the United States itself, with hostility and danger not only from the British and American Governments, but from anti-Irish sections of the American public.

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The strength of the Irish-American vote was well summed up in the blunt words of an enemy and an Admiral of the United States Navy: "They are like zebras, either black horses with white stripes, or white horses with black stripes. We know they are not horses. They are asses. But each of those asses has a vote, and there are lots of them!" The Irish threw a copy of the *Washington Times* in this outspoken critic's face; a list of the names of five thousand Irish-American dead on the battlefields of Europe—and the offer of more on demand. This suggestion of a conflict of national loyalties was one of the problems that soon faced the de Valera Mission to the United States. The subsequent difficulties were gleefully exploited by de Valera's critics, who had long been very eloquent on the power of Irish-American secret societies over Irish national movements. Another simmering resentment was the feeling of many Irish-Americans that since the Famine millions of dollars had been poured into Irish political coffers with doubtful results and precarious gratitude. The vigour of the American Administration from the entry of America into the war had made an Irish-American leader declare that all his life he had been looking for a more efficiently tyrannical Government than the British and he had now found it. And this administration had very little sympathy with the Irish demands.

It would gladly have packed de Valera, Dr. McCartan and all the other arrivals by the secret route out of the country, and it brought all the pressure it could to intimidate the Irish-American leaders whenever opportunity occurred, but the political skill and power of the Irish-American organisations checked it and soon the propagandist ability of Dr. McCartan, the magnetic

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spell of de Valera, and the combined gifts of such Irish-American leaders as Judge Cohalan, Joseph McGarrity and John Devoy transformed an atmosphere of hostility, ignorance and indifference into a force that swept the United States from end to end. The more optimistic of the Irish Republicans hoped that recognition of the Irish Republic might be won, others something short of that, but between them both the Irish issue became a living one and as grave an embarrassment to the United States administration as it was to the British. But as in Ireland, the difference in the final aims masked by the words "Irish Republic," "self-determination" and "Republican form of Government" was also to lead to disaster and bitterness. And this disaster and bitterness centred round Saint Eamon de Valera and the two Wise Serpents: Judge Cohalan and John Devoy: the first, dictator of the Irish-American vote; the second, "the greatest of the Fenians," but also the unsparing controversialist.

The truth about John Devoy, the unsparing controversialist, was fixed for ever in Padraic Colum's witty phrase: "He was no Chesterfield." For his vituperation was in the tradition of the great Cromwellian pamphleteers, fed by all the filth of the Parnellite split and the fiery factionism of Fenianism, somewhat soiled and lamed by an early training in that American journalism parodied by Mark Twain and Charles Dickens, but redeemed by the sincerity and tenacity of the man himself. For over thirty years John Devoy cow-hided his political enemies as an unspeakable gang of traitors, humbugs, liars, libertines, embezzlers, catamites, poltroons, cut-throats, and byblows.

These flourishes of the Old Man were not taken

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over-seriously by his friends and admirers, for they regarded them as only symptoms of his irritable temperament, intensified by his deafness and the dangers and rigours of his extraordinary life. When annoyed in daily life, he had a habit of dancing on his hat. His verbal dances were much the same: his angry boots damaged his hat, his angry adjectives and crashing nouns harmed himself alone. His defenders claimed, too, he was often blamed for his camp followers' scurrility, and was the other side dumb?

His genuine generosity, his lifelong poverty, the romance of a career that had embraced the French Foreign Legion, the Fenian insurrection, the escape of James Stephens, five grim years in Portland Prison, and an organising ability that had left its mark on every Irish upheaval for half a century for long made him an awe-inspiring symbol of an implacable Ireland beyond the seas.

On de Valera's arrival the outstanding Irish-American leader was Judge Daniel F. Cohalan of the Supreme Court, coldly described by his enemies as a lime-lighting politician, Grand Sachem of the Tammany Society, overbearing, intriguing, ruthless and as conscious of a superiority to the native Irish at heart as the most lofty Anglo-Saxon; more warmly by Cardinal O'Connell as a future liberator of Ireland and the one American of Irish blood to whose great intellect and wonderful organising ability the solidification of the Irish race in the United States was due: and yet again by out and out supporters as the scholar of exceptional parts; the master of the arts of political controversy and the science of government; the eminent jurist at whose feet the whole United States Senate sat in awe and gratitude to

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learn international law; history and affairs; victim of a vindictive Wilsonian vendetta: a noble panther ever crouched to spring on the British Lion.

It was with this able and formidable man who regarded himself, and was regarded by the bulk of the American public outside Irish-American circles, as the leader of the Irish cause there that de Valera soon collided. The Judge was convinced that he knew the American mind and that this raw and romantic interloper could not. They clashed on everything from literary style to policy, but it is arguable that de Valera was the more far-seeing, however much his critics linger over his dictatorial attitude and his obstinate insistence on his own way. For Cohalan, in spite of his remarkable record, at the best was a brilliant politician and in the last resort an American patriot first and last. It is true that he had a case against de Valera who combined the rôles of dictator, politician and statesman in his usual bewildering manner.

On February 6, 1920 de Valera gave an interview to the *Westminster Gazette* and *New York Globe* in which he made the "Cuban" proposals that afterwards were used against him as evidence that he was one of the first to suggest a compromise and "let down" the Republic. He said:

"If it were really her independence and her simple right to life as a national State that Britain wanted to safeguard, she could easily make provision for that without in any way infringing upon the equally sacred right of Ireland to its independence and its life.

"The United States by the Monroe Doctrine made provision for its security without depriving the Latin republics of the South of their independence and their

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life. The United States safeguarded itself from the possible use of the Island of Cuba as a base for an attack by a foreign power by stipulating: 'That the Government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or compacts with any foreign Power or Powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any way authorise or permit any foreign Power or Powers to obtain by colonisation or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgment in or control over any portion of this said island.'

"Why doesn't Britain make a stipulation like this to safeguard herself against foreign attack as the United States did with Cuba? Why doesn't Britain declare a Monroe Doctrine for the two neighbouring islands? The people of Ireland, so far from objecting would co-operate with their whole soul.

"But there are even other ways in which Britain could safeguard herself if this plea were really an honest plea. An international instrument could easily be framed—as in the case of Belgium—an instrument that meant more for the safety of France, as the last war proved, than the actual possession of Belgian territory, especially if such possession were against the will and despite the protests of the Belgian people."

This interview raised a hornets' swarm round de Valera that has not yet subsided. De Valera's defence as given to Dr. McCartan, whom he dispatched to Ireland to defend his position to the Dáil Cabinet, was "First, he had wanted to start England talking, so that some basis of settlement might be considered; secondly, in the interview, he quoted only one paragraph of the Platt Amendment relating to Cuba, to show that Ireland was willing to discuss safeguards for English security,

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compatible with Ireland's independence; and, lastly, that only his enemies, and Devoy and Cohalan, had put a hostile construction on the interview, in pursuance of the campaign they had started against him when he arrived in the United States, and which overtly and covertly they had since continued."

McCartan found Griffith and Collins ready to accept de Valera's explanation of the interview and anxious to shut down further discussion on it, although other members, including Cathal Brugha, showed marked hostility: "From my session with the Cabinet, the attitude of all who spoke, except Griffith, towards the sovereign Republic was made clear to me: and it was equally clear that de Valera, without consultation with any of his colleagues, and without compulsion from anyone, had given up our claim to the sovereign status proclaimed by the men of Easter Week and reaffirmed by the Dáil of January 21. . . . The Cabinet had acted on the problem of de Valera, in his Cuban rôle, practically as we had acted on it in the United States; and for the same compelling reason: de Valera had usurped the right to speak and act for Ireland; and the situation left us without the power to challenge him."

But the Old Man and the Judge had both the wish and the power to challenge de Valera. The *Gaelic American* launched a vigorous series of attacks on de Valera and the Cuban proposals in terms so immoderate that de Valera refused Boland's offer to "run down to the office and talk the Old Man round." He added that "he wanted to see how far these people will go." In a letter to Arthur Griffith, quoted by Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, Vol. II, p. 4, he had already declared that he

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laboured under no misapprehension as to the relations between them, that the Judge was unfriendly and "big as the country is, it was not big enough to hold the Judge and myself." By the second or third broadside from the *Gaelic American* de Valera had come to the conclusion that these people had gone further than he liked and addressed the Judge the following letter:

ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Office of the President,
1045 Munsey Building,
Washington, D.C.

February 20th, 1920.

DEAR JUSTICE COHALAN,

After mature consideration I have decided that to continue to ignore the articles in the *Gaelic American* would result in injury to the cause I have been sent here to promote. The Articles themselves are, of course, the least matter. It is the evident purpose behind them and the general attitude of mind they reveal that is the menace.

I am answerable to the Irish people for the proper execution of the trust with which I have been charged. I am definitely responsible to them, and I alone am responsible. It is my obvious duty to select such instruments as may be available for the task set me. It is my duty to superintend every important step in the execution of that task. I may not blindly delegate those duties to anyone whatsoever. I cannot divest myself of my responsibilities.

I see added force being applied day by day to the power end of the great lever of American public opinion

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with which I hope to accomplish my purpose. I must satisfy myself as to the temper of the other end of the lever.

The articles in the *Gaelic American*, and certain incidents that have resulted from them, give me grounds for the fear that in a moment of stress the point of the lever would fail me. I am led to understand that these articles in the *Gaelic American* have your consent and approval. Is this so?

The Friends of Irish Freedom Organisation is an association of American citizens founded to assist the Irish people in securing the freedom the Irish people desire. By its name, and by its constitution, it is pledged to aid in securing recognition for the established Republic. I am convinced it is ready to co-operate to the full with the responsible head of the Republic, who has been sent here to seek recognition.

You are the officer of the Friends of Irish Freedom, who, *de facto*, wields unchallenged the executive power of that organisation. You are the officer through whom its several resources are in the main applied. You are the officer who has accepted its most important commissions, and spoken not merely in its name, but in the name of the whole Irish Race in America. It is vital that I know exactly how you stand in this matter.

The whole question is urgent, and I expect you will find it possible to let me have a reply by Monday. To avoid all chance of miscarriage, I am having this delivered by Mr. Boland personally.

I remain very sincerely yours,

(Signed) EAMON DE VALERA.

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The Judge cleared the decks and replied with the following heavy explosive:

NEW YORK,
February 22nd, 1920.

HON. EAMON DE VALERA,
President of the Republic of Ireland,
1045 Munsey Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR PRESIDENT DE VALERA,

Your communication, dated February 20th, was handed to me by Mr. Boland on Saturday afternoon. I was amazed at its contents. In spite of its tone, and because of the position which you occupy, I am responding to it.

The *Gaelic American* is edited, as you know, by Mr. John Devoy, for whose opinions and convictions I entertain the highest respect. I control neither him nor them.

That he has the right to comment upon or discuss your public utterances, or those of any man who speaks for a cause or a people, I assume you will grant. In any event, it is a right recognised by all Americans, as one of our fundamental liberties. We have no law of lèse-majesté here, nor, so far as I can judge, is there talk of having one in the democratic and free Ireland in which we believe.

Into any controversy you may have with Mr. Devoy or others I refuse to be drawn.

May I venture to suggest that you evidently labour under a serious misapprehension as to the relations which exist between you and me.

I know no reason why you take the trouble to tell

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me that you can share your responsibility to the Irish people with no one.

I would not let you share it with me if you sought to do so. That is a matter between them and you.

What I have done for the cause of the independence of the Irish people recently and for many years past I have done as an American whose only allegiance is to America, and as one to whom the interest and security of my country are ever to be preferred to those of any and all other lands. What the effect and extent of that work may be will be decided by the members of the race and by general public opinion.

I have no appointment from you or any other spokesman for another country, nor would I under any circumstances accept one.

So long and just so long as I can continue to work thus, I shall exercise such influence and talent as I may have in the same way and for the same ideals as in the past.

The people of Ireland have placed themselves unequivocally upon record as favouring complete independence for their country, and unless and until they by vote reverse that decision, I shall regard it as final no matter what any man or set of men may say to the contrary.

With their demand for independence I am confident all Americans will finally agree, as it is not alone just, but in line with the ideals and best interests of our country and essential to the permanent peace of the world, that all nations and all peoples should be free.

If Ireland were to change her position and to seek a measure of self-government that would align her in the future with England as an ally, in what I regard as the inevitable struggle for the freedom of the seas that

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must shortly come between America and England, every loyal American will without hesitation take a position unreservedly upon the side of America.

A British Monroe Doctrine that would make Ireland the ally of England and thus buttress the falling British Empire, so as to further oppress India and Egypt and other subject lands, would be so immoral and so utterly at variance with the ideals and traditions of the Irish people as to be indefensible to them as it would be intolerable to the liberty-loving peoples of the world.

I believe the people of Ireland were in deadly earnest in declaring for absolute Independence, and no voice but that of the people themselves can convince me that they intend to take up a position which will put them in hostility to America.

Should they however take such a step—as a free people have undoubtedly the right to do—I know that the millions of Americans of Irish blood, who have created this great movement in favour of Ireland's Independence which you found here upon your arrival, will once again show with practical unanimity that we are for America as against all the world.

Are you not in danger of making a grave mistake when you talk in your communication of selecting “instruments” in this country, and of “levers” and “power end” and “other end of lever” through which you hope to accomplish your purpose here?

Do you really think for a moment that any self-respecting American will permit any citizen of another country to interfere as you suggest in American affairs?

If so, I may assure you that you are woefully out of touch with the spirit of the country in which you are sojourning.

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You point out that I have on occasion been called upon to speak not merely in the name of the Friends of Irish Freedom, but in the name of the whole Irish Race in America. May I call your attention to the fact that it was always as an American and for my own countrymen that I spoke?

You might have added that at those times, as at others, I have said nothing that took from the self-respect or dignity of those whom I represented, or that left any doubts upon my hearers that I believed many millions of Americans sympathised with that demand of the people of Ireland for absolute Independence which you came here to voice.

I respectfully suggest in closing that you would be well advised if you hesitate before you jeopardise or imperil that solidarity of opinion and unity of action among millions of American citizens which you found here amongst us when you came, which have been the despair of England's friends, and have already accomplished so much for America and for Ireland.

Those millions do not desire to see a return of the conditions which under the late Mr. Redmond made the political activities in Ireland a football in English party politics.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) DANIEL F. COHALAN.

The Old Man in the meanwhile was making Lord Chesterfield turn somersaults in his grave with whole armies of shrieking headlines and presenting himself with handsome bouquets as the Father of the Irish Republic. His campaign was regarded as a thoroughly dishonest and insincere one even by many very critical

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of de Valera, since, in the first place, he persisted in pretending that other provisions of the agreement between Cuba and the United States not quoted by de Valera should be dragged in, and in the second place, he had been slow to support the Dáil Eireann Declaration of Independence as a formal declaration of an independent Republic. He had applauded de Valera's first more general demands for simple self-determination and denounced Dr. McCartan's closest assistant in the campaign for recognition as a hidden British Secret Service agent working on weaker mentalities.

The belief of de Valera's supporters that Devoy and Cohalan wanted to drive him out of America was confirmed by a letter of Devoy's that fell into their hands, dated February 26, 1920, and which read in part:

"All the advantages, except the scandal of a fight, are on our side now. . . . We'd be worse off in the end than if we fought it out now. I am also convinced that he meant to fight us all along and was only waiting for a good opportunity. He selected the wrong time and the wrong issue, because his judgment is very poor, but he is filled with the idea that the great ovations he got here were for him personally and practically gave him a mandate to do as he pleases. His head is turned to a greater extent than any man I have met in more than half a century. . . .

"He fumed about what I wrote as an attack on him and claimed I misrepresented his meaning. I did not. The words he used about the Platt Amendment and the 'English Monroe Doctrine for the two neighbouring islands' meant exactly what they said, and the implications were as clear as daylight. He has never taken

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them back, but is still complaining of being 'mis-represented.' . . . The Judge had not said a word in the discussion, but they wanted to make an excuse for 'the reading out of the movement' with which you know he has been threatening the Judge for some time and which I believe he would have attempted this week but for the answer which Cohalan sent last Monday to the most astonishingly foolish letter ever written by a public man. . . . The response he got, which was the finest thing Cohalan has ever done, evidently deterred him from 'reading out' him and me. . . . His motto is 'the King can do no wrong,' and the motto of his heelers is the Wilsonian one, 'stand behind the President.' "

Afterwards an independent witness who tried to bring peace between the factions said bitterly of de Valera: "I'm disillusioned. I thought the President was a bigger man. His idea of harmony reminds me of Li Hung Chang's, who said the harmony he best loved to hear was the ring of the headsman's axe on the neck of his opponents."

The *Gaelic American* continued its insinuations that de Valera was a perpetual "exhibition of the whole alphabet of autocracy"; that his ignorance of American history and politics was only equalled by his capacity for spreading disunion among the Irish-Americans; that his arrogance estranged those who had spent a lifetime in Ireland's service; that he was a British tool whose Cuban proposals were placing the Irish people on the side of the British Empire and turning them into potential enemies of the United States; that he was wasting funds subscribed for the fight in Ireland on royal suites in a scandalous and prodigal manner; and much else.

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Throughout, by general admission, the Judge preserved his dignity, and never sank to personal abuse.

Nor did Devoy and Cohalan stop at words. They planned a meeting of some hundred Irish-American leaders to confer with them at the Park Avenue Hotel, New York, on March 19, 1920, where "as a matter of justice" the Cohalan-Devoy case would be set forth and a public demand made that de Valera should leave the United States. The gathering, as first planned, consisted mostly of their own supporters with a few other prominent Irish-American leaders to give this secret trial a representative character. The one person not invited was Eamon de Valera, but he had not been forgotten. An invitation to a dinner in Chicago in his honour was thoughtfully arranged for the night following the trial. No guests had been asked and the empty banquet hall was to coincide with the findings of the trial. This pretty plan went wrong. Harry Boland had discovered what a Timon of Athens feast was waiting for the President, so a polite refusal was sent. The Devoy letter already quoted in part fell by mistake into the hands of de Valera's friends. Joseph McGarrity gate-crashed at the preliminaries to the secret trial and when Cohalan denounced de Valera, demanded that the charges should be made to de Valera's face. After an attempt to browbeat McGarrity and a statement that the President could not be reached as he was feasting in Chicago, the sprinkling of representative Irish-American leaders present overbore the chairman, Michael J. Ryan, and insisted that de Valera should be summoned. It was pointed out that the original *Gaelic American* attacks had been launched without warning, and no attempt had been made to get de Valera's explanation

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of the *Westminster Gazette* interview although he had been in New York at the time. As for that Chicago engagement, de Valera was just then at the Waldorf-Astoria, a few minutes from the Park Avenue Hotel. A committee was appointed to invite him to attend.

Joseph McGarrity now overbore the chairman who ordered no one to leave the room by defiantly telephoning for de Valera. Boland at first refused to let "the President answer for his policies before a self-appointed aggregation of American politicians," but McGarrity overbore him too, and soon de Valera, Boland and members of the invitation committee arrived outside.

"He'll have to wait!" cried the chairman, and the heavy guns of the Cohalanite orators went on. De Valera was not intimidated or affronted by this crude reception and sent up a second message to which the same reply was given. Boland lifted the Cohalanite henchman at the door in his arms on the third refusal, and the accused entered and boldly made their way to the platform.

According to the Cohalan account this is what happened: "There was much heated discussion concerning the actions of President de Valera and members of his entourage in America. Joseph McGarrity of Philadelphia, who had become obsessed with the idea that *he* was the real leader of the Irish race in America, became so obstreperous in his talk and actions that Chairman Ryan threatened him with expulsion from the Conference unless he showed better manners. President de Valera himself became so excited at one point that he blurted out that he had not been in America a month when he concluded that there was not room in the

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country for Justice Cohalan and himself! Bishop Turner of Buffalo mildly rebuked him by saying that Justice Cohalan could not be expected to leave his native land because President de Valera had come in. President de Valera stated that he had long been a student of the principles of democracy, and that in his opinion the Irish-American leaders whom he had met had yet to learn the A B C of democracy. John Devoy retorted that 'The exhibition which Eamon de Valera had given was *the whole alphabet of autocracy!*' At one point Harry Boland went into hysterics and had to retire from the room to compose himself. When he had revived he took upon himself much of the blame for the mistakes President de Valera had been making, saying he had unwittingly advised the President wrongly in many matters. Finally, after about eight hours continuous discussion, a decision was reached whereby President de Valera promised not to interfere in matters that were of American concern only, while he himself was to have no interference in matters that were of purely Irish concern." (John J. Splain, *Voice of Ireland*, Dublin, 1923, p. 247.)

A certain vagueness towards the end of the picturesque Cohalanite picture is filled in by Dr. McCartan and others. De Valera gave a very dignified version of his difficulties and the hostility he had met with from Cohalan and Devoy in turn. Both contradicted his defence, while the chairman turned sharply on him when he complained he was being treated like a schoolboy and snarled: "You deserve to be treated like a schoolboy." His statement proved satisfactory to the independent element present, however, and there was a sensation as de Valera asked quietly would the meeting

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believe him if he showed documentary evidence of the existence of a six months' old conspiracy to drive him out of America, of which this meeting was merely part?

"Who wrote the letter?" asked someone.

John Devoy leaped to his feet and denied he had ever written such a letter. The Cohalanites denied afterwards that the letter bore the Boland-de Valera interpretation, but it was noted that Devoy was rather prompt in his denial, for he was seated some distance from the platform and his deafness was proverbial. When McGarrity threatened on de Valera's request to read the letter there was a great to-do. Amidst shouts for peace and cries from his supporters that the Judge, in the interests of peace, was big enough to admit an error and any former hasty actions, a reconciliation was staged for the moment. The Judge agreed that bygones should be bygones, strode towards de Valera and offered his hand. De Valera shook it. John Devoy promised solemnly that all attacks on de Valera in the *Gaelic American* should stop. A statement was agreed upon that causes of dissension had been straightened out and a plan for united action adopted. Then Bishop Turner called on them all to kneel down and pray for peace and reconciliation, and Dr. McCartan noted that many wept as they knelt, for all day they had sat in anguish "while they heard the death-knell of their hopes in the wrangling of their leaders."



IN spite of this sordid undercurrent of friction and intrigue, de Valera had his consolations: America remembered a past debt to Ireland and spoke no uncertain word.

The United States Senate ratified the Peace Treaty with the reservation that the United States adhered to the principle of self-determination and a previous resolution of sympathy with the expectations of the Irish people for a government of their own choice adopted by the Senate on June 6, 1919. It also declared that "when such a government is attained by Ireland, a consummation it is hoped is at hand, it should be promptly admitted as a member of the League of Nations."

De Valera cabled to Griffith:

"A *Te Deum* should be sung throughout all Ireland. We thank Almighty God, we thank the noble American nation, we thank all the friends of Ireland here who have worked so unselfishly for our cause—we thank the heroic dead whose sacrifices made victory possible. Our mission has been successful. The principle of self-determination has been formally adopted in an international instrument. Ireland has been given her place among the nations by the greatest nation of them all."

During the Senate debate on the reservation the Cuban proposals were mentioned as evidence that de

Valera had been influenced by Sir Horace Plunkett, with the result of some division in the Irish ranks.

But in spite of all his critics of his American mission was there not a strong case for Eamon de Valera?

In the last resort de Valera was in the right because he cared not only for Ireland first and last, but for certain things even greater than the welfare of his country: the Christian ideal, peace, mankind. At least, he always thinks so, and his career is not a bad basis for the belief, although to ordinary mortals this personal conviction of de Valera is trying. Especially is it trying to a Supreme Court Judge who has had to mix with politicians for the best part of his life. He did not like and he was not accustomed to meet a stubborn professor who wanted to remain on his pedestal and yet pull all the strings besides outshining him as the Leader of the Irish Race.

If de Valera had remained on his pedestal, the Judge being human might have smiled a wry smile but have left him there. If de Valera had waltzed into the merry Tammany circus, the Judge might have even yielded him the palm and Grand Sachemship. If de Valera had kept his eyes on the stars and spoken noble truths, no man would broadcast the noble truths more ably than the Judge; but to try all three! To the hard-headed Irish-American politicians de Valera seemed an impossible person because he would not agree to drop party politics altogether and concentrate on the American public and Government or to play party politics thoroughly, backstairs methods, dirty dodges and all, or be a marble statue and let the experts get on with the dirty work against dirtier dogs than themselves.

Not that they found de Valera altogether lacking in

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finesse when they came up against him or that they found him devoid of political craft and compelling personality on a platform. They had to admit his power over the American public and an amazing tact throughout his long series of meetings all over the United States when, although feelings ran high over the League of Nations issue, not one of his auditors could dispute the justice of his stand on that question and partisans of every shade of thought listened respectfully, their susceptibilities unruffled:

“We shall fight for a real democratic League of Nations, not the present unholy alliance, which does not fulfil the purposes for which the democracies of the world went to war. I am going to ask the American people to give us a real League of Nations, one that will include Ireland.

“I well recognise President Wilson’s difficulties in Paris. I am sure that if he is sincere, nothing will please him more than being pushed from behind by the people, for this pressure will show him that the people of America want the United States Government to recognise the Republic of Ireland.

“This is the reason I am not eager to spread propaganda in official circles in America. My appeal is to the people. I know that if they can be aroused government action will follow. That is why I intend visiting your large cities and talking directly to the people.” (New York, June 1919.)

Or again:

“A new Holy Alliance cannot save democracy; a just League of Nations, founded on the only basis on which it can be just—the equality of right amongst nations, small no less than great—can. America can see

to it that such a League is set up and set up now. . . . We in Ireland watched with keen interest every development. Our strategic object since we came out of prison has been to put Ireland in the proud position she now occupies, a definite claimant for her full rights, ready to enter the world family of nations." (Quoted Dwane, p. 131.)

Even his Cohalanite critics paid a tribute afterwards to de Valera's first six months in America and admitted that he presented the Irish case with remarkable ability and touched the popular imagination, although they added that his temperamental outbreaks, snubs for life-long workers in the cause and rejection of their advice revealed even then an incapacity for leadership and worse. De Valera's early difficulties with them, however, would seem to be due mainly to his insisting on carrying out the instructions of Dáil Eireann to float a loan and in refusing to be browbeaten. He, as revealed in Dr. McCartan's none too flattering pages, seems to have made an effort to placate Cohalan and the other leaders with whom he conferred. But a certain precision over commas and the poetic shades of meaning and appeal of certain words were among the things with which de Valera first managed to ruffle the Judge.

But no Irish leader ever swept America from coast to coast as de Valera swept America then. "What Sherman's march to the sea was to the Union, de Valera's tour from ocean to ocean is likely to be to the cause of Irish and world freedom!" declared an American writer. Church dignitaries, State governors, judges, senators, big business men and all classes of the American people united to honour him, and his meetings of fifteen to twenty thousand broke into cheers numbered by half-hours

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on many clocks, while de Valera stated the Irish case with many parallels to the American Revolution and sharp dictums that the union between Ireland and Great Britain was the union of the grappling hook. It was noted the meetings cheered the orators but listened to de Valera. His curious deferential smile was popular, and his industry and enthusiasm summed up in a phrase: "The President is a plugger!" He received the freedom of many cities and honorary degrees from many universities, while the Chippawa Indians invested him with the honour of Chief, rarely bestowed upon a white man. In one tour he travelled over 8000 miles and often worked eighteen hours a day. He addressed many State legislatures, and in consequence they immediately passed resolutions of sympathy with the Irish people in their struggle. In New York, Cleveland and elsewhere, uniformed American troops escorted him as a guard of honour. His influence spread far beyond the audiences of Irish exiles to whom he symbolised bitter memories and mighty hopes.

His most spectacular triumph was the defeat of the League of Nations Treaty in the American Senate. "Sign that Treaty as it stands and you enslave Ireland!" was his constant cry. His most spectacular defeat was his failure, for reasons still bitterly debated, to get either of the two big American parties to adopt as a plank in their election programmes recognition of the Irish Republic. His most tangible achievements the nationwide attention he focussed on the Irish claims and the six million dollars he raised in the Dáil Bonds drives.

His most spectacular triumph caused a senator to declare: "We'll have to build a monument to the Irish. For the third time they have saved the United States."

"The Treaty and the Covenant," declared an English publicist, "have been killed by Irish opinion." "De Valera has not left us standing room in America," said another. And yet before this campaign powerful financial interests, the bulk of the Press with the considerable exception of the Hearst papers, organised Labour as led by the American Federation of Labour under Samuel Gompers, a strong section of the Republican Party, the entire Democratic Party, the Protestant Churches almost without exception, and at least one powerful Catholic organisation, all combined to favour the League and Treaty brought home in triumph by President Wilson. It was a paradox that this fight was led by a future President of the League Council, but no searcher of his American speeches of this time will ever be able to resurrect a line or word likely to embarrass de Valera to-day.

His fight for recognition was hampered by the many cross-currents in the domestic politics of the United States. Judge Cohalan's friends threw all the blame on de Valera for the failure of the attempt to insert a recognition plank in the Republican Presidential platform for 1920. Cohalan had won an approval from the resolution's committee for a resolution pledging the Chicago Convention "to recognition of the principle that the people of Ireland have the right to determine freely, without dictation from outside, their own government institutions and the international relations with other states and peoples," by 7 votes to 6. De Valera's resolution ". . . we favour the according by our Government to the elected Government of the Republic of Ireland full and formal official recognition . . ." was defeated by 12 votes to 1, whereupon

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de Valera sent word to the committee that he refused to accept the Cohalan plank—and no plank at all appeared in the final Republican programme.

The picketing of the Chicago Convention by de Valera himself and others is described by Dr. McCartan as “trespassing on American hospitality,” but he adds: “President de Valera, by virtue of a courtesy unique in American history, was permitted unmolested to carry out this programme. The only American criticism of his activity that I saw was a cartoon of him in one of the Chicago dailies, with the legend: ‘De Valera assures us he is not a candidate for the Presidency of the United States.’”

No useful purpose would be served in pursuing further the adventures of Saint Eamon among the Serpents, for sufficient has been said to show that Eamon was a Saint and the Serpents—for even serpents have a case—had perhaps a claim to wisdom that lifted them above common or garden snakes. Eventually de Valera broke openly with Devoy and Cohalan and formed a separate organisation backed by large masses of Irish-American opinion and other elements in United States won over by his magnetic personality and a wider appeal.

In his absence from Ireland the Anglo-Irish struggle had entered on an ever-darkening phase never absent from his thoughts and described to him at first-hand in the frequent bulletins from Michael Collins, who also visited the de Valera household at Greystones throughout the grimmest days of the guerilla war so that he might add a postscript with news of Mrs. de Valera and the children after the most critical, questioning, appreciative, cordial or openly reproachful letter. This gave them

a common bond in the stormy controversies that raged round the de Valera mission: however much they differed on policy at times, before them always was their country in danger from the British Terror, a more vital question to them than the political prestige of the Irish in the United States.

De Valera had failed in his first objective, but he had raised six million dollars, and shaken America so well before he failed that he had succeeded in his second: for all America knew Ireland's case, and President Wilson had had to admit: "Ireland's case from the point of view of population, from the point of view of the struggle it has made, from the point of interest it has excited in the world, and especially among our own people, is the outstanding case of a small nationality." And during the Lord Mayor of Cork's long fast to death a wave of sympathy swept through the United States in October and deepened with the cables that brought news of an ever-darkening phase and rang out in the words of the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland:

"We would extend our sympathy to the great British people. The army which is the instrument of their Government in Ireland would also seem to be the instrument of the destruction of that moral heritage which was their glory and which cast its lustre on each and all of them. The sun of that glory seems to have finally set over Ireland. The official Black and Tans in Ireland compete for the dishonour of Anglo-Saxon civilisation with our unofficial lynch mobs. And decent folk everywhere are ashamed and scandalised that such things can still be in their day and generation."

And truly the phase was an ever-darkening phase to

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which Eamon de Valera prepared to return, his mission ended. Over a sombre picture the splendour of Terence MacSwiney cast its white flame. Assassinations, burnings, street ambushes, executions, hunger-strikes, reprisals and counter-reprisals had become the normal round. Michael Collins was Acting President of the Irish Republic. Arthur Griffith and other leaders were in prison. Richard Mulcahy and Cathal Brugha were the leading spirits in the guerilla war that raged ever more fiercely. Lloyd George banged the table, thought hard, wiped an odd tear from his eye—for in those days, to be just to him, he had more imagination than some of his generals—and wondered how he could save the name of the British Empire and dish the Sinn Feiners. So while the hangman, the firing squad, the Black and Tans went on with their work; while the guns of the I.R.A. spat from gloomy corners and cracked on the hillsides of the south and a whole nation clenched its teeth and endured, peace kites fluttered into that sombre sky. Many influences, including strong sections in Great Britain, were exposing and denouncing the state of affairs in Ireland and calling for peace.

Towards the middle of December de Valera left the United States, returned to Ireland by the same route as he had come, and on Christmas Eve, 1920, was greeted by Michael Collins in Dublin.



ON Mr. de Valera's return to Ireland he found himself on the eve of the greatest crisis of his career. The growing brutality of the war saddened him and he expressed his view to the Dáil that "their policy should be to stick on, to show no change on the outside as far as possible, and at the same time to make the burden on the people as light as they could. This policy might necessitate an easing off of their attacks on the enemy." (Beaslai, Vol. II, p. 147.) This pacific spirit was challenged by some of those present, including Collins, who also resented fiercely a proposal of de Valera's that he should go to the United States as a peace-maker in the Irish-American split. His own letter urging this plan on Collins ends on a friendly note of personal concern: "We will not have here, so to speak, all our eggs in one basket." He urges Collins not to be too "modest to exploit your fame or notoriety, if you prefer it, but I would suggest that it be mainly on the lines of how moderate and full of common sense you are." De Valera explains that the Irish-American split had existed long before he landed and his coming had only brought it to a head. He makes the admission that the United States, except in case of war, would never recognise the Irish Republic. The demand should not be dropped, but their policy should now be to get the United States to demand a place for Ireland within

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the League of Nations if America entered the League. According to Beaslai, who quotes this letter in full, de Valera also informed the Dáil: "If I were President of the United States myself, I could not, and I would not, recognise Ireland as a Republic." (Vol. II, p. 18.)

De Valera had now to face the future developments of the secret negotiations that Lloyd George had been carrying on with Collins and Griffith through intermediaries. De Valera during this time resumed his direction of the movement, and his supervision of the minute details of the different departments with which as President he was in touch. The peace feelers on the part of Lloyd George had been mainly manœuvres for position, but Merlin with his usual wizardry was luring the woodcocks nearer to the gin. But they were petrels and eagles. Collins—as the long description given by Beaslai of the attempt at negotiations conducted by Archbishop Clune proves—had shown himself a wily and distrustful bird. Mr. de Valera now cooed with subtlety, now shrieked with majesty. The Terror still raged and the Little War took on a darker aspect. De Valera issued a defiant message through a representative of the International Press of America in which he identified himself and the Dáil Eireann Ministry with the war of defence, and justified ambushes as the weapon any weak nation would use in the circumstances. This message was widely posted round Dublin on tram standards and hoardings, and caused some surprise, as de Valera was usually more reticent. In this public statement he only followed the example of Griffith in the same position.

In the May elections Sinn Fein swept Ireland again almost unopposed, and in Ulster, Griffith, Collins and

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de Valera were elected to constituencies as well as to the seats they held elsewhere. The Little War went on, ever more fiercely; from Dungarvan to Donegal and from Cork to Dublin the grim struggle grew in intensity: ambushes, attack, counter-attack, while in Dublin itself the historic Custom House was seized and burned in broad daylight by the I.R.A.

But the negotiations went on. Mr. Lloyd George was reported as saying to an American visitor that he would meet Mr. de Valera and the other Irish leaders without conditions, without promises and hoped the conference would lead to an exchange of opinions to find common ground. In the American Press Mr. de Valera said he would make a public reply to any such public statement. In other interviews, Mr. de Valera discussed in his characteristic manner pledges of neutrality, Ulster, Dominion status. The days of the Invisible Republic were drawing to an end. Soundings, emissaries and rumours flourished.

But things grew more definite than that. The British Government frowned on any attempts to arrest Mr. de Valera, and to his dismay, released him on the several occasions the military blundered into arresting him. But this tenderness exasperated Mr. de Valera. He felt—and his enemies afterwards took care he should feel—that this was an attempt to discredit him. He defiantly came out of hiding but was too upset to work for a week. Then he received the invitation of Lloyd George on June 24 inviting him to a conference. Matters moved quickly. On July 8 the Truce was arranged and on July 11 the Terror ended and the Truce began. In the meanwhile Arthur Griffith and other leaders were released. Mr. de Valera went to London for several interviews

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with Mr. Lloyd George and the great duel of the immovable versus the irresistible began, with a certain coolness on both sides. After each interview, Mr. de Valera gave the result to Arthur Griffith, Austin Stack, Robert Barton and Erskine Childers, who had accompanied him until the final result: the July proposals of Dominion Home Rule qualified by safeguards for British security, Irish liability for the National Debt, Free Trade between Ireland and Britain, and the acceptance of Partition. De Valera informed Lloyd George that he could never agree to such terms and wished to return them on the spot. After some fencing it was agreed that Mr. de Valera should consult with his colleagues and send a considered reply.

Nothing was made public until a Public Session of Dáil Eireann on August 16 which lasted a week. In the meanwhile, the Dáil Ministry had examined the terms and rejected them, and Mr. de Valera had informed the British Government of this official refusal, afterwards confirmed by the Dáil. After some more manœuvring, the epistolary all-in wrestle between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. de Valera began with hits, counter-hits, quotations and side-steppings in which Mr. de Valera sent Mr. Lloyd George down for the count so far as argument was concerned, but Mr. Lloyd George rose just before the gong with the prize he was after: the ear of half Ireland and the ear of the world.

On September 14, at the close of the long correspondence,¹ at a private Session of the Dáil, Messrs. Griffith, Collins, Barton, Duggan and Gavan Duffy were announced as the plenipotentiaries selected by the

¹ Published as White Paper: Cmd. 1502; Cmd. 1539. See also Appendix III.

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Dáil Ministry to discuss with the British representatives "to ascertain how the association of Ireland with the community of nations can be best reconciled with Irish national aspirations." This selection was ratified by the Dáil.

After some fine stage-play by Mr. Lloyd George and some displays of subtlety and injured innocence by Mr. de Valera, the delegation finally left for London, but it was a near thing. Mr. Lloyd George was quite exhausted, and afterwards said with feeling that negotiating with Mr. de Valera was "like sitting on a merry-go-round and trying to catch up with the swing in front." And again that everyone had his own hell, and Mr. de Valera's hell would be that infernal Republic he would hint at in his letters just when Mr. Lloyd George had got him to the point. But this does not damp Mr. de Valera's more eulogistic defenders who say that Mr. de Valera has a caustic and polished tongue that would pierce a plate of Bessemer steel, and every time Mr. Lloyd George has ventured near Mr. de Valera he has been a very sorry man. This is a controversy in which Mr. de Valera has never interfered.

The Truce and negotiations dragged on through autumn towards December, and this drugged calm had a profound effect on the mind and future of Ireland. It was the convalescence after a fever. The Irish people were kept in the dark as to the progress of the negotiations, and one thing above all was never mentioned or even hinted at: the Association Proposals of Mr. de Valera. Nothing was known of Mr. de Valera's hints to the Dáil that some modification of the full demand was inevitable, and the general public, only too relieved to be able to walk the streets without losing life or limb, had

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become too disciplined to ask definite questions or entertain any very definite ideas as to what that outcome might be. Both the British and the Irish delegates, so far as they broke silence, seemed still far from any basis of agreement.

A vague unrest agitated the stormy calm and the long strain of the Little War began to tell, and some ugly symptoms, symptoms that were ill omens, began to appear. There was a mad glitter in the eyes of the young men flocking back from the internment camps and jails, much intense training of the post-Truce I.R.A. recruits, a wave of intemperance, outbreaks of violence and shooting in the North of Ireland, and a general *carpe diem* from a sorely racked population.

Sometimes a rumour went round that a break was imminent, and as the Truce lasted on into December the more this rumour grew and raced another rumour rife among those in close touch with the Mansion House Headquarters, the rumour that the delegation was a peace delegation and at a pinch would prove a peace delegation, that Griffith was determined on peace, that Michael Collins had said that the delegates would make a settlement. In general, the man in the street interpreted that as meaning Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith had been converted to the view that the only way out was "Colonial Home Rule," but ready to go on fighting if Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues proved too outrageous and unyielding in their terms, and the man in the street whenever he gave the matter a thought would have said that de Valera was an equally moderate and determined man. In this the man in the street or "the plain citizen," as many contending orators were soon to woo him, was paying Collins and de Valera the

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compliment of crediting both leaders with sentiments common to many men in the street and many plain citizens, but with reservations.

It was doubtful after all whether any but the directors of party machines, and, to be sure, Mr. Lloyd George with the British Empire and all that behind him, had the right to have very positive ideas about anything. Too often had there been rumours of truces and settlements with an appalling climax of horrors. But happily the plain citizen had little prophetic vision and he nursed his shaken nerves and shattered world back as much as he could in the drugged normality of the Truce. He would have liked to go to hell his own way, but had his own doubts as to whether the nation's leaders or Mr. Lloyd George would agree to let him.

Over fifteen years have passed since the Treaty crisis first racked Ireland, and things are seen in a calmer light to-day. The inner history of the negotiations has been told with brilliance and impartiality in Frank Pakenham's *Peace by Ordeal*. Based on documents long withheld from general knowledge, and unhampered by too close a recollection of the atmosphere and personalities of the time, this account helps to hold the balance in the bitter controversy. And Mr. de Valera is the hero of Mr. Pakenham's story. He claims "From the middle of 1921 he (Mr. de Valera) laboured unwearily to find some way of peace with England consistent with Irish independence; that as the negotiations developed he let himself be drawn and helped draw others to that extreme point where further concession meant compromise with principle; that he never did so compromise, but that he said from the beginning what he says to-day: That the Treaty robbed Ireland of independence, would

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be accepted from no feeling of affection or hope of profit but from fear of extermination, and was beyond the power of Ireland, as it would have been beyond the power of any nation of self-respecting manhood, to keep for long." (p. 350.)

We shall hear from Mr. de Valera a similar defence. And from his critics a criticism of that defence.¹

But it would be dishonest not to raise the question of what Mr. de Valera's position and influence on the negotiations was, and to what extent the Peace Delegation was his delegation. The choice of the delegates rested with the Dáil Cabinet. Both Stack and Brugha refused point-blank to go at all. De Valera had won them over to his Association proposals with reluctance, but they would not go to London. Michael Collins, although he had proved himself an able negotiator in the preliminary soundings between himself, Lloyd George and Archbishop Clune, never looked on himself as a politician and finally gave way only after considerable pressure from de Valera. Griffith agreed, but he was very positive he could not bring back a Republic and had always made it clear he would not break off negotiations on the question of the Crown.

The relations between Brugha and Collins were not cordial. Nor the relations between Erskine Childers and Arthur Griffith: nor the relations between Mr. Gavan Duffy and Arthur Griffith.

Mr. Pakenham quotes Stack on Mr. de Valera's position (p. 96): "It was expected as a matter of course that de Valera would head the deputation. But, says Stack, 'he had his objections. He pointed out that he was in a position of head of the State as well as head of

¹ See Appendix II.

the Government, and that his absence would always be a good reason for our delegates making no hasty agreement in London. And I think he mentioned, and if he did not I think someone else did, the failure of President Wilson at Versailles. De Valera prevailed.' Stack might have added that he only did so by use of his casting vote, and in face of the votes of Griffith, Collins and Cosgrave—the first small symptom of the coming rift."

Stack's reminiscences, as quoted by Pakenham, help us to reconstruct the attitude of de Valera to the Treaty. Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald's correction of Stack's account (*Observer*, June 16, 1935), however, only deepens the shadows of the depressing and unedifying picture:

"Mr. de Valera did state a reason for not going. Whoever went must compromise, he said. And even then no agreement might be reached. In that case the old fighting method must be returned to. A people cannot fight for a compromise. Rightly or wrongly, they looked to him as the symbol of the maximum demand, a Republic. If compromise failed to procure a settlement, he wished to be in a position to rally the people. That statement was made to the Dáil. . . . Much significance is given to the oath taken by Dáil deputies, but again it was to the Dáil that Mr. de Valera stipulated that it should be clearly understood that before he or others took that oath it implied no more than an undertaking to do the best one could do for Ireland under any existing circumstances. . . .

"The true history of that period would reveal that up to the time when the complete responsibility was placed upon the shoulders of Griffith and Collins, Mr. de Valera showed repeatedly that he was determined

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on moderation to secure an agreement. Griffith was chosen to make a settlement, not 'to break on the Crown.' Stack and Brugha were certainly opposed to any settlement, and would be doubly opposed to any settlement to which Collins was committed. But though they could weaken Ireland's position in British eyes by making a split when negotiations were pending, their influence in Ireland against such a combination as de Valera, Griffith and Collins would be negligible. The desire to postpone such a split explains much of what happened during 1921. But at a later stage, for some unexplained reason, Mr. de Valera turned from Griffith and Collins and moderation to support Brugha and Stack. . . . We are told of a conversation between one who brought home the Treaty (Mr. Fitzgerald himself) and Mr. Stack. To the remark, 'I did not think he (Mr. de Valera) was against this kind of settlement before we went to London,' Mr. Stack says he replied, 'He's dead against it now anyway. That's enough.' The stress was on the word 'now.' It was a cry of triumph. In the absence of Griffith and Collins, Stack and Brugha had won the most powerful ally they could hope for—Mr. de Valera. Griffith and Collins had won a peace in London, but in their absence their enemies had won a victory in the Cabinet at home."

Mr. Fitzgerald also deals with the Treaty negotiations at more length in the Irish quarterly, *Studies*, September, 1935.

Other causes of friction arose between Mr. de Valera and the delegates: in particular his open interference, as Griffith and Collins felt it to be, by a public protest to the Pope about ten days after the Conference opened. Benedict XV had sent a telegram to King George, to

which the King had replied sympathetically. Mr. de Valera criticised "the ambiguities" sent "in the name of King George" and reaffirmed "The independence of Ireland has been formally proclaimed."

The rest of the controversy will appear. It will be seen that Mr. de Valera has his own reply to these criticisms.

One more problem remains: the alleged Midnight ultimatum of Mr. Lloyd George that compelled the signing of the Treaty without reference to Dublin as the delegates had agreed before they left at a final Cabinet meeting on December 3rd in Dublin. Mr. Barton told the Dáil later:

"The English Prime Minister with all the solemnity and the power of conviction that he alone of all men I ever met can impart by word and gesture—the vehicles by which one man oppresses and impresses the mind of another—declared that the signature and recommendation of every member of our delegation was necessary or war would follow immediately."

By a strange irony, Mr. Barton drafted the economic provisions of the Treaty that were to be of much use to Mr. de Valera during the Economic war. So it would seem he and Mr. Lloyd George are quits, for Mr. Lloyd George only with reluctance consented to full fiscal freedom for Ireland at the very last minute to win over Griffith.

Mr. Lloyd George's defenders have always claimed that this threat was like an even more famous statement of Mr. de Valera's, a warning rather than a threat. He pointed to a situation that would inevitably lead to war. It will be seen that the situation in Ireland at that time was indeed an explosive one.

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The real case against the British delegates was their very subtle side-stepping on the question of Irish unity. It is proved by Pakenham beyond all doubt, and this is confirmed by Lord Birkenhead's biography, that the Treaty would never have been signed had Collins and Griffith not believed that the Boundary Commission would secure that.

If a certain playfulness is permissible in retrospect about the famous and brilliant Lloyd George-de Valera correspondence, none whatever would be seemly about the London negotiations over which shadows hung from the first day. It is the story, saddening to both sides, of personal antagonisms in a split Irish delegation, of one dogged little Irishman fighting a losing fight against four of the ablest negotiators in the British Empire and winning his own objective with foes in front and foes behind, but at the cost of the two things he loved best: Irish peace and Irish union. For Arthur Griffith is the only hero in this sad epic. To some Mr. Lloyd George is the villain, though his courage cost him his political life, and it may be doubted whether his now famous last-minute flourish that led to the signing of the Treaty was to him more than a helpful piece of stage-craft—had he not found this device useful at Versailles and perhaps thought a sword rattle an oblique salute to Irish sovereignty? For the second time in history he had saved the British Empire: it is the argument of Mr. de Valera that had Lloyd George gone one step further, he might have saved the world. But in some things Mr. Lloyd George is an out-and-out Sinn Féiner.

The Treaty was signed in the small hours of December 6, 1921. It gave Ireland "the same con-

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stitutional status in the community of nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa, with a Parliament having power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Ireland and an Executive responsible to that Parliament, and shall be styled and known as the Irish Free State.”¹

It did more than that: it set Ireland by the ears. For on the very next words, “subject to the provisions hereinafter set out,” many constitutional and unconstitutional experts were soon to fall and then upon each other, that is to say in Ireland, for in England there was a gasp of astonishment that such generosity should be even questioned, except by Lord Carson, who said the Treaty was signed with a revolver pointed at the heads of a cowardly Government that the Sinn Féin army had beaten. He could hardly speak what he thought of the nerveless, scuttling poltroons who had done something to make all his Cromwellian ancestors turn in their graves. He tried hard.

In Ireland there was general but not too exuberant rejoicing. The Irish delegation returned to Ireland amidst general rejoicings and congratulations. Then from the Mansion House, where the Dáil Cabinet sat in conference on December 8, disquieting whispers of division came. And the following day the Treaty controversy began, for the news was made public that Mr. de Valera was going to throw all his influence against it and that the Dáil Cabinet was split in earnest.

¹ See Appendix IV.


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AFTER this meeting of the Dáil Cabinet, on December 9 the following letter of de Valera was published in the Press:

To the Irish People:

A Cháirde Gaedheal:

You have seen in the public Press the text of the proposed Treaty with Great Britain. The terms of this agreement are in violent conflict with the wishes of the majority of this nation as expressed freely in successive elections during the past three years. I feel it my duty to inform you immediately that I cannot recommend the acceptance of this Treaty, either to Dáil Eireann or to the country. In this attitude I am supported by the Ministers of Home Affairs and Defence (Austin Stack and Cathal Brugha). A public session of Dáil Eireann is being summoned for Wednesday next at 11 o'clock. I ask the people to maintain during the interval the same discipline as heretofore. The members of the Cabinet though divided in opinions are prepared to carry on the public services as usual. The Army, as such, is, of course, not affected by the political situation, and continues under the same orders and control. The great test of our people has come. Let us face it worthily without bitterness, and, above all, without recriminations. There is a definite constitutional way of resolving

## *Behind Closed Doors*

our political differences—let us not depart from it, and let the conduct of the Cabinet in this matter be an example to the whole nation.

MANSION HOUSE, DUBLIN,  
*December 8, 1921.*

It cannot be said that Mr. de Valera showed much greater political wisdom than Rory O'Connor after he heard of the signing of the Treaty, for he was quite as peremptory, precipitate and dictatorial as that brave and ill-starred man, and more blameworthy, since his influence was a wider one and his responsibility deeper. If he feared civil war, could he have taken a stranger way of averting it than his public announcement of a split in the Cabinet and his anticipation of the verdict of the country and the Dáil, which he never denied were the ultimate judges of the issue? What need was there for this personal explanation of not only his own but of Brugha's and Stack's positions? When he discovered, as discover he did, that Collins and Griffith had signed the Treaty in the belief that he would accept it, why did he not resign with his minority and leave the question to the Dáil? Why was he in such a hurry to split that national unity due in large part to his leadership?

But his first pronouncement, to be accurate, was not regarded as irrevocable by the world outside the inner circles of the Cabinet. A very common opinion was: "De Valera is only sacrificing himself. There has had to be a climb-down and as President and in his position he must protest and then stand down." It was recognised that there was nothing sinister in his reference to constitutional methods of resolving differences, since the fear of the consequences of a split had haunted others

## *Unique Dictator*

besides de Valera. It was known that Arthur Griffith had feared such a split and its sequel, and had often expressed this fear to honest inquirers and his confidants who sounded him on the possibility of accepting a Dominion settlement. It was regarded as evidence that the President was no callous and scheming politician that he should remember, as Francis Stuart eloquently puts it, "the long tradition of Irishmen fighting and suffering through the generations, and knowing that they had not died for some half-measure, but for the lost sovereignty."

His moderate reputation even strengthened this feeling, for there were even convinced constitutionalists who exclaimed with admiration: "By God, we never thought there was such stuff in de Valera." Many who would have fought on to a hopeless finish through loyalty to their leaders and their convictions but saw no alternative to the Treaty in the circumstances, read his declaration in the same spirit. Others saw the issue more simply: another evidence of the fundamental honesty of de Valera, the man of his word, so honest that he had to tell even Lloyd George the truth in season and out of season, the man who, if he took an oath or signed a document, would feel bound in spirit and letter. He was consistent. He stood for the Republic.

Then from the Mansion House vague but ever more disquieting waves of rumour and doubt swept through Ireland, and with the first appearance of de Valera at the Dáil Session of December 14, not only Collins and Griffith but the President himself were on trial before the people of Ireland and the world. For before the Dáil abruptly vanished into the decent seclusion of a private four days' session, de Valera, with many points

of order and technical debating hits, had accused the delegates of exceeding their instructions. Collins, with an angry flourish of his dark hair, had said he had been called a traitor; Griffith, more coldly, that "the British Ministers did not sign the Treaty to bind their nation. They had to go to their Parliament and we to ours for ratification." Cathal Brugha with characteristic bluntness had demanded an immediate public session there and then to decide the plain yes or no, and one Cork deputy persisted in shouting amidst cries of "Order" and a rebuke from the Speaker: "The Irish people are our masters and we are the masters of our Cabinet."

And from behind the closed doors of the secret session came a whisper: de Valera did not stand for the "lost sovereignty" or "the established Republic," but for an alternative to the Treaty already signed,<sup>1</sup> for Tweedledee instead of Tweedledum. For after a long debate about the negotiations, which showed to the supporters of Collins and Griffith at least that even Stack and Brugha had a patch of the tar-brush, Dr. McCartan challenged de Valera for a policy if the Treaty were rejected. De Valera had the members supplied with copies of Document No. 2. He then asked for a unanimous rejection of the Treaty and the publication of these proposals as a peace offer to England. The deputies were asked to regard this as confidential and return their copies.

For this he was denounced as a quibbler and a compromiser and an autocrat. His own explanation as published in his own version of the document was: "the proposals were primarily the fruit of a long and

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix V.

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earnest effort by a united Cabinet to find an honourable basis for a lasting peace, a settlement to reconcile British security with Irish rights, an effort only defeated by a last-minute threat of war." To the contention that the difference between the Treaty and these proposals was but a shadow, Mr. de Valera retorted: "Why not surrender the shadow to those who thought the difference worth dying for, why not use united national force and energy to get Britain to accede to these voluntary proposals and assure stable government and moral and material progress to Ireland?"

Speaking later in the public session, on January 6, 1922, Mr. de Valera said:

"So certain was I of that promise being fulfilled to the letter (to submit any document to Dublin before signing) that when I heard an agreement had been reached I said: 'We have won.' And when I saw in the newspapers that the agreement that was reached was one absolutely incompatible with our position—a subverting of the State as it stands—I knew that a step which was practically irrevocable had been taken.

"There was but one way to save that, and it was this: we had been working definitely for peace—for a peace that would be consistent with our position, and I believe definitely that such a peace was possible.

"I had pinned, personally, my efforts to get the idea of any association whatever with the British Empire or the States of the British Empire—to try to make that palatable, so to speak, to those who thought not merely of an independent Ireland in the sense of being a sovereign state, absolutely isolated, such as Switzerland. I had attacked it as a political problem. I had kept myself detached, so to speak, calmly, coldly weighing

the factors of the situation; and I had kept clearly in mind all the time the fundamental fact of all, that is, the satisfaction of the aspiration of complete independent Irish nationality. I saw nothing in the proposals that we had made that was inconsistent with that; and when I made a rough outline of the proposals to the first Ministry meeting, after the members came out of prison . . . I got it unanimously accepted in the main outline."

Mr. de Valera then explained his presenting of his document to the Secret Dáil Session thus:

"I produced a rough draft document. It was nothing else, and it was put before this House for the purpose of eliciting views, not of those who had accepted the Treaty . . . as of those who stood for the Republic in its simplest form of isolation. The document was presented in the same way as I would present it to the Cabinet. We had Private Sessions here during the war. Those Private Sessions were respected and no one spoke outside of anything that happened. I put that document before them. It is only when I have got general agreement that I look after it from the point of view of form and wording.

"I didn't want the world to see it because I didn't want the world or the Irish people confused. And I didn't want the British to see it because I didn't want them to see the changes that would be made in it by this assembly. I asked it to be kept as a confidential document. It was the first time that confidence was broken. . . . The position, therefore, is this: . . . at that stage I saw at once we had for the first time in this Dáil got parties. I withdrew the document."

Mr. de Valera also explained he was anxious to keep as close to the British Treaty as possible and not make

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any changes that were not vital, even presumably the clauses denounced as partitionist in the Treaty.

Such was Mr. de Valera's explanation of his proposals and his alleged autocracy and quibbling. It was not an undignified explanation, but it did not commend itself to many who now turned towards the isolationists who thought more in terms of guns than constitutions. It proved more than a red herring to his immediate political fortunes, red ruin rather. "By God!" cried Dr. McCartan during the public debate, "I would rather have Mick Collins and Arthur Griffith than those quibblers there!" But the red herring was kept in pickle for a season. The curtain rose with due dignity over the first sessions of the Dáil in public, and after Griffith had spoken with a massive dignity and sincerity and Collins with a stormy and persuasive force, de Valera stated his case.



IN his opening speech against the Treaty in the Dáil on December 19, 1921, Mr. de Valera with characteristic precision said it would scarcely be in accord with Standing Orders if he were to move directly the rejection of the Treaty; it would be sufficient that he should appeal to that House not to approve the Treaty. They were elected by the Irish people, and did the Irish people think they were liars when they said that they meant to uphold the Republic, which was ratified by the vote of the people three years ago, and was further ratified—expressly ratified—by the vote of the people at the elections last May?

“When the proposals,” continued Mr. de Valera, speaking in accents that showed he was extraordinarily moved by the occasion, and his tones gradually kindling to a fire unusual with him, “for negotiation came from the British Government asking that we should try by negotiation to reconcile Irish national aspirations with the association of nations forming the British Empire, there was no one here as strong as I was to make sure that every human attempt should be made to find whether such reconciliation was possible. I am against this Treaty because it does not reconcile Irish national aspirations with association with the British Government. I am against this Treaty, not because I am a man of war, but a man of peace. I am against this Treaty because it



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will not end the centuries of conflict between the two nations of Great Britain and Ireland.

“We went out to effect such a reconciliation and we have brought back a thing which will not even reconcile our own people much less reconcile Britain and Ireland.”

He hinted at the Barton picture of a Lloyd George ultimatum:

“If there was to be reconciliation, it is obvious that the party in Ireland which typifies national aspirations for centuries should be satisfied, and the test of every agreement would be the test of whether the people were satisfied or not. A war-weary people will take things which are not in accordance with their aspirations. You may have a snatch election now, and you may get a vote of the people, but I tell you that Treaty will renew the contest that is going to begin the same history that the Union began, and Lloyd George is going to have the same fruit for his labours as Pitt had. When in Downing Street the proposals to which we could unanimously assent in the Cabinet were practically turned down at the point of the pistol and immediate war was threatened on our people. It was only then that this document was signed, and that document has been signed by plenipotentiaries, not perhaps individually under duress, but it has been signed, and would only affect this nation as a document signed under duress, and this nation would not respect it.”

He began his argument on the oath that was to continue for ten years and more!

“I wanted, and the Cabinet wanted, to get a document we could stand by, a document that could enable Irishmen to meet Englishmen and shake hands with

them as fellow-citizens of the world. That document makes British authority our masters in Ireland. It was said that they had only an oath to the British King in virtue of common citizenship, but you have an oath to the Irish Constitution, and that Constitution will be a Constitution which will have the King of Great Britain as head of Ireland. You will swear allegiance to that Constitution and to that King; and if the representatives of the Republic should ask the people of Ireland to do that which is inconsistent with the Republic, I say they are subverting the Republic. It would be a surrender which was never heard of in Ireland since the days of Henry II; and are we in this generation, which has made Irishmen famous throughout the world, to sign our names to the most ignoble document that could be signed?"

For a moment he dropped rhetoric for homely similes:

"When I was in prison in solitary confinement our warders told us that we could go from our cells into the hall, which was about fifty feet by forty. We did go out from the cells to the hall, but we did not give our word to the British jailer that he had the right to detain us in prison because we got that privilege. Again on another occasion we were told that we could go out to a garden party, where we could see the flowers and the hills, but we did not for the privilege of going out to garden parties sign a document handing over our souls and bodies to the jailers. Rather than sign a document which would give Britain authority in Ireland, they should be ready to go into slavery until the Almighty had blotted out their tyrants."

Loud applause greeted this outburst, and Mr. de Valera's voice grew harsh and fiery. "A wrecking

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speech," murmured the more cynical listeners. He went on:

"If the British Government passed a Home Rule Act or something of that kind I would not have said to the Irish people, 'Do not take it.' I would have said, 'Very well; this is a case of the jailer leading you from the cell to the hall,' but by getting that we did not sign away our right to whatever form of government we pleased. It was said that an uncompromising stand for a Republic was not made. The stand made by some of them was to try and reconcile a Republic with an association. There was a document presented to this House to try to get unanimity, to see whether the views which I hold could be reconciled to that party which typified the national aspirations of Ireland for centuries. The document was put there for that purpose, and I defy anybody in this House to say otherwise than that I was trying to bring forward before this assembly a document which would bring real peace between Great Britain and Ireland—a sort of document we would have tried to get and would not have agreed if we did not get."

"It would be a document," proceeded Mr. de Valera with a conviction that impressed all who heard him, "that would give real peace to the people of Great Britain and Ireland and not the officials. I know it would not be a politicians' peace. I know the politician in England who would take it would risk his political future, but it would be a peace between peoples, and would be consistent with the Irish people being full masters of everything within their shores."

"Criticism of this Treaty is scarcely necessary from this point of view, that it could not be ratified because

it would not be legal for this assembly to ratify it, because it would be inconsistent with our position. We were elected here to be the guardians of an independent Irish State—a State that had declared its independence—and this House could no more than the ignominious House that voted away the Colonial Parliament that was in Ireland in 1800 unless we wished to follow the example of that House and vote away the independence of our people. We could not ratify that instrument if it were brought before us for ratification. It is, therefore, to be brought before us not for ratification, because it would be inconsistent, and the very fact that it is inconsistent shows that it could not be reconciled with Irish aspirations, because the aspirations of the Irish people have been crystallised into the form of Government they have at the present time. As far as I am concerned, I am probably the freest man here to express my opinion.

“Before I was elected President at the Private Session I said, ‘Remember I do not take, as far as I am concerned, oaths as regards forms of Government. I regard myself here to maintain the independence of Ireland and to do the best for the Irish people,’ and it is to do the best for the Irish people that I ask you not to approve but to reject this Treaty.”

Menace, argument, a more charitable note, argument once more:

“You will be asked in the best interests of Ireland, if you will pretend to the world that this will lay the foundations of a lasting peace, and you know perfectly well that even if Mr. Griffith and Mr. Collins set up a Provisional Government in Dublin Castle, until the Irish people would have voted upon it the Government

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would be looked upon as a usurpation equally with Dublin Castle in the past. We know perfectly well there is nobody here who has expressed more strongly dissent from any attacks upon the delegates that went to London than I did.

“There is no one who knew better than I did how difficult is the task they had to perform. I appealed to the Dáil, telling them the delegates had to do something a mighty army or a mighty navy would not be able to do. I hold that, and I hold that it was in their excessive love for Ireland they have done what they have. I am as anxious as anyone for the material prosperity of Ireland and the Irish people, but I cannot do anything that would make the Irish people hang their heads. I would rather see the same thing over again than that Irishmen should have to hang their heads in shame for having signed and put their hands to a document handing over their authority to a foreign country. The Irish people would not want me to save them materially at the expense of their national honour.

“I say it is quite within the competence of the Irish people if they wished to enter into an association with other peoples, to enter into the British Empire; it is within their competence if they want to choose the British monarch as their King, but does this assembly think the Irish people have changed so much within the past year or two that they now want to get into the British Empire after seven centuries of fighting? Have they so changed that they now want to choose the person of the British monarch, whose forces they have been fighting against, and who have been associated with all the barbarities of the past couple of years; have they changed so much that they want to choose the

King as their monarch. It is not King George as a monarch they choose; it is Lloyd George, because it is not the personal monarch they are choosing, it is British power and authority as sovereign authority in this country."

The cynical grew more cynical as Mr. de Valera went on:

"The sad part of it, as I was saying, is that a grand peace could at this moment be made, and to see the difference! I say, for instance, if approved by the Irish people, and if Mr. Griffith, or whoever might be in his place, thought it wise to ask King George over to open Parliament, he would see black flags in the streets of Dublin. Do you think that would make for harmony between the two peoples? What would the people of Great Britain say when they saw the King accepted by the Irish people greeted in Dublin with black flags? If a Treaty was entered into, if it was a right Treaty, he could have been brought here. ('No, no.') Yes, he could. (Cries of 'No, no.') Why not? I say if a proper peace had been made you could bring, for instance, the President of France, the King of Spain, or the President of America here, or the head of any other friendly nation here in the name of the Irish State, and the Irish people would extend to them in a very different way a welcome as the head of a friendly nation coming on a friendly visit to their country, and not as a monarch who came to call Ireland his legitimate possession. In one case, the Irish people would regard him as a usurper, in the other case it would be the same as a distinguished visitor to their country. Therefore, I am against the Treaty, because it does not do the fundamental thing and bring us peace. The Treaty leaves us a country

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going through a period of internal strife just as the Act of Union did."

Mr. de Valera lashed his auditors with their own words in the past:

"One of the great misfortunes in Ireland for past centuries has been the fact that our internal problems and our internal domestic questions could not be gone into because of the relationship between Ireland and Great Britain. Just as in America during the last Presidential election, it was not the internal affairs of the country were uppermost; it was other matters. It was the big international question. That was the misfortune for America at the time, and it was the great misfortune for Ireland for 120 years, and if the present Pact is agreed on that will continue. I am against it because it is inconsistent with our position, because if we are to say the Irish people don't mean it, then they should have told us they didn't mean it.

"Had the Chairman of the Delegation said he did not stand for the things they had said they stood for, he would not have been elected. The Irish people can change their minds if they wish to. The Irish people are our masters, and they can do as they like, but only the Irish people can do that, and we should give the people the credit that they meant what they said just as we mean what we say.

"I do not think I should continue any further on this matter. I have spoken generally, and if you wish we can take these documents up, article by article, but they have been discussed in Private Session, and I do not think there is any necessity for doing so."

He summed up his case generally and in detail:

"Therefore, I am once more asking you to reject

the Treaty for two main reasons, that, as every Teachta knows, it is absolutely inconsistent with our position; it gives away Irish independence; it brings us into the British Empire; it acknowledges the head of the British Empire, not merely as the head of an association, but as the direct monarch of Ireland, as the source of executive authority in Ireland.

“The Ministers of Ireland will be His Majesty’s Ministers, the Army that Commandant MacKeon spoke of will be His Majesty’s Army. (Voices: ‘No.’) You may sneer at words, but I say words mean, and I say in a Treaty words do mean something, else why should they be put down? They have meanings and they have facts, great realities that you cannot close your eyes to. This Treaty means that the Ministers of the Irish Free State will be His Majesty’s Ministers (cries of ‘No, no’) and the Irish Forces will be His Majesty’s Forces (‘No, no’). Well, time will tell, and I hope it won’t have a chance, because you will throw this out. If you accept it, time will tell; it cannot be one way in this assembly and another way in the British House of Commons. The Treaty is an agreed document, and there ought to be pretty fairly common interpretation of it. If there are differences of interpretation we know who will get the best of them.”

Then Mr. de Valera ended on a warning note:

“I hold, and I don’t mind my words being on record, that the chief executive authority in Ireland is the British Monarch—the British authority. It is in virtue of that authority the Irish Ministers will function. It is to the Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Army, who will be the English Monarch, they will swear allegiance, these soldiers of Ireland. It is on these grounds as being



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inconsistent with our position, and with the whole national tradition for 750 years, that it cannot bring peace. Do you think that because you sign documents like this you can change the current of tradition? You cannot. Some of you are relying on that 'cannot' to sign this Treaty. But don't put a barrier in the way of future generations.

"Parnell was asked to do something like this—to say it was a final settlement. But he said, 'No man has a right to set.' No man 'can' is a different thing. 'No man has a right'—take the context and you know the meaning. Parnell said practically, 'You have no right to ask me, because I have no right to say that any man can set boundaries to the march of a nation.' As far as you can, if you take this (cries of 'No' and 'Yes') you are presuming to set bounds to the onward march of a nation." (Applause.)

Impassive and silent, Arthur Griffith listened to him, motionless, a mask on his eyes. From the dark eyes of Michael Collins, chin set and fists clenched, a challenge glittered, and his dark hair waved, a very standard of battle.

Throughout the intolerable tension and fatigue of the debate de Valera was a strange figure, by turns formulistic and fiery, by turns passionate and dignified, by turns personal and remote, by turns niggling on details and appealing to his sacred principles. Once he cried:

"I am sick and tired of politics, so sick that no matter what happens, I would go back into private life. . . . It is because I am straight that I meet crookedness with straight dealing always. . . . I know what others don't know: where the verge of the precipice was, and nothing would have pulled me beyond it, not even

Lloyd George and all his Empire could have brought me over it. . . . I am not a person for political trickery, and I don't want to pull a red herring across."

Again he would rise to the declaration:

"I am against you in principle. And I believe that to get the best out of that Treaty you will need us in a solid compact body. We will keep in a solid compact body. We will not interfere with you unless we find that you are going to do something that will definitely injure the Irish nation. And if we have two evils to choose from I hope it will be the lesser of the two, in the best interests of the Irish nation, that we will choose." Next minute he was praying the assembly to proceed constitutionally and not smash up the Republic or break up the Constitution. Or he would protest that if the famous Cuban proposals meant what his enemies read into them, he would deserve to be impeached. Or he would protest that Michael Collins as Minister of Finance had overstepped his province because he had caused inquiries to be made about a kidnapped journalist instead of leaving the matter to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Defence. There must be undivided authority and responsibility. What the poor journalist thought of his pilgrimage by car brightened by a whisky bottle and a revolver as either responsibility or authority was not discussed by the President in any of his many amendments, points of order and resolutions. Once indeed he apologised for a remark very tame in the temperature of that debate, and apologised handsomely and with contrition. But for all his changes and divagations from principles to points of order, de Valera dominated the House.

Over against him stood Arthur Griffith, who said

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afterwards that as he sat there and listened to the attacks on himself he marvelled at the smallness of his own mind not to suspect the depths of villainy of which he was capable. Griffith grew less patient after Miss MacSwiney's speech of two hours and forty minutes and asked whether any speaker needed more than ten or fifteen minutes to express a plain meaning. Certainly he was plain himself as he said :

“ Nearly three months ago Dáil Eireann appointed plenipotentiaries to go to London to treat with the British Government and to make a bargain with them. We have made a bargain. We have brought it back. . . . We did not seek to act as the plenipotentiaries; other men were asked and other men refused. We went. The responsibility is on our shoulders; we took the responsibility in London and we take it here. I signed the Treaty not as the ideal thing, but fully believing, as I believe now, it is a Treaty honourable to Ireland, and safeguards the vital interests of Ireland. . . . We are here, not as the dictators of the Irish people but as the representatives of the Irish people, and if we misrepresent the Irish people, then the moral authority of Dáil Eireann, the strength behind it and the fact that Dáil Eireann spoke the voice of the Irish people is gone, and gone for ever. . . .

“ . . . The gentlemen on the other side are prepared to recognise the King of England as head of the British Commonwealth. They are prepared to go half in the Empire and half out. They are prepared to go into the Empire for war and peace and treaties, and to keep out for other matters, and that is what the Irish people have got to know is the difference. Does all this quibble of words—because it is merely a quibble of words—mean

that Ireland is asked to throw away this Treaty and go back to war? So far as my power or voice extends, not one young Irishman's life shall be lost on that quibble. . . .

" . . . It is the first Treaty between the representatives of the Irish Government and the representatives of the English Government since 1172 signed on an equal footing. It is a Treaty of equality and it is because of that I am standing by it. . . . We have brought back the flag; we have brought back the evacuation of Ireland after 700 years by British troops and the formation of an Irish army. We have brought back to Ireland her full rights and powers of fiscal control. We have brought back to Ireland equality with England, equality with all nations which form that Commonwealth, and an equal voice in the direction of foreign affairs in peace and war. . . .

" . . . Now it has become rather a custom for men to speak of what they did and did not do in the past. I am not going to speak of that aspect except one thing. It is this. The prophet I followed throughout my life, the man whose words and teachings I tried to translate into practice in politics, the man whom I revered above all Irish patriots was Thomas Davis. In the hard way of fitting practical affairs into idealism I have made Thomas Davis my guide. I have never departed in my life one inch from the principles of Thomas Davis, and in signing this Treaty and bringing it here and asking Ireland to ratify it, I am following Thomas Davis still."

After a quotation from Davis, Mr. Griffith ended:

" I ask then this Dáil to pass this resolution, and I ask the people of Ireland, and the Irish people everywhere, to ratify this Treaty, to end this bitter conflict of centuries, to take away that poison that has been

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rankling in the two countries and ruining the relationship of good neighbours. Let us stand as free partners, equal with England, and make after 700 years the greatest revolution that has ever been made in the history of the world—a revolution of seeing the two countries standing not apart as enemies but standing together as equals and friends.”

The long debate with its fire, drama, dirty linen and dialectics lasted until January 10. On January 7, the Treaty was ratified by 64 votes to 57, a majority of 7. From then until the close de Valera was the centre of stormy scenes. Soon after the result was declared de Valera broke down and wept amidst the sympathy of the entire assembly. “A glorious record,” he said, “for four years; it has been four years of magnificent discipline in our nation.” The Dáil closed after several personal scenes with Arthur Griffith’s election as President and his compliment to de Valera: “I think President de Valera is acting fairly—some of the other members are not. We want to get a chance. We have not spoken about ourselves, but for three months past we have been working night and day. We were faced with the task of fighting our English opponents first, and then we had to come back and fight our Irish friends, and now we have to take on as big a job as ever men took on.”



DE VALERA'S opposition to the Treaty, his determined campaign against it, and his final participation in the Civil War are episodes in his career that for many are overwhelming reasons to condemn him unheard. His judgment, his motives, and even his physical courage have been attacked. It has become an axiom that he caused the Civil War. His pedantry, his vanity, or, at best, his temporary mental exaltation in this crisis are held to prove him once and for all the author of all the ills through which Ireland passed in 1922-23 and since.

It is not so simple as that, and Mr. de Valera's own defence will be quoted in support of his case that throughout he strove for an honourable and peaceful solution of the ultimate problem and the immediate crisis. There is a case against him, though even this must be qualified, that he handled very badly the situation created, first, by the signing of the Treaty and, second, by the I.R.A. split. There is the even stronger case that he proved a false prophet in his warnings against the Treaty and the limitations it would impose on future generations, and the barriers it was supposed to set to the march of a nation. But it will be seen that the tangle of events in 1922 after the split in the Dáil and the I.R.A. cannot be blamed on any one person or party, on de Valera, on Griffith or Collins, on the Irregulars. Nor

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yet on Mr. Lloyd George, as seen through his enemies' spectacles, with Black and Tan bludgeon decorated with shamrocks and oracular whispers to Collins and Craig.

A glance at Ireland moving towards Civil War will prove this. Mr. de Valera continued his campaign against the Treaty with vigour, in fiery proclamations and speeches that certainly showed he had forgotten that his auditors were not philosophers or mathematical professors to whom a century is but a second. He had the defence, even in the deplorable utterances soon to be quoted, that as national leader he had the right to utter a warning, and that further he was not necessarily responsible for what fools or knaves might read into his words, but he certainly gave knaves and fools most ample opportunities.

The most tender biographer must be staggered by Mr. de Valera's outbursts in the spring of 1922, but the astonishment of the biographer is nothing to the astonishment of Ireland at the time. It is true that there was the excuse for Mr. de Valera and for everyone else that the effects of the Little War, the Terror, the demoralising Truce, but more than that, the split that had now spread to the Army and the Dáil, were beyond the power of any one man to control. It is also true that Mr. de Valera, Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith were now overwrought, overstrained and weary men.

As the spring of 1922 passes the shadows in Ireland gradually darken. In spite of every effort of the leaders and both factions, in spite of peace effort after peace effort, the breaking point approaches. Had the Irish people known a little more they would have had the sad consolation that the British Government that remained so sedately aloof was catching the same fever.

Place of honour must first be given to Mr. de Valera's famous gasconade: the "wading through blood" speech.

It was on St. Patrick's Day at Thurles that Mr. de Valera made his much-debated prophecy, qualified incitement or historical judgment of the Irish Republican Brotherhood or paternal warning to a distracted country:

"If they accepted the Treaty, and if the Volunteers of the future tried to complete the work the Volunteers of the last four years had been attempting, they would have to complete it, not over the bodies of foreign soldiers, but over the dead bodies of their own countrymen. They would have to wade through Irish blood, through the blood of the soldiers of the Irish Government, and through, perhaps, the blood of some members of the Government, in order to get Irish freedom."

In this flying southern tour he made other speeches at Killarney, Tralee and Waterford. At Killarney he asked:

"Acts had been performed in the name of the Republic which would be immoral if the Republic did not exist in the sense which he had said. Men and women had been shot for helping the enemy, and there would be no justification for the shooting of these if the Republic did not exist." He was silent on the question of the majority rule basis of Dáil Eireann which his calmer judgment approved, but he said:

"He knew the case that could be made about the non-existence of the Republic. It would be said that though the Republic was proclaimed, set up by the vote of the people, still the Republic as such could not function because of the presence of British troops. During the



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European War the Belgian Government was not able to function in Belgium, and was Belgium on that account regarded as being less than it had been? ”

Of this Thurles speech, Mr. Childers' organ, *Poblacht na hEireann*, took the view that it was a warning, very hypothetical, of the remote future results of accepting the Treaty:

“There is a storm in the pro-Treaty Press at the statement made by Eamon de Valera last week that if the Treaty were accepted by the people the only way by which Irishmen could subsequently achieve their freedom would be by fighting Irishmen in the service of the Free State Government. . . . A fair, just and absolutely necessary warning given by the responsible Republican leader of what would inevitably happen in the future were the freedom of Ireland to be voted away is twisted into a threat of civil war. . . . Not upon those who warn the nation against the grim heritage of acquiescence in subjection, but upon those who would bind them to it, lies the guilt of any future civil war.” (March 22, 1922.)

In calmer days this was Mr. de Valera's own gloss on his St. Patrick's Day message:

“He had made a speech at Thurles which had been grossly misrepresented as suggesting that they should go ‘wading in blood.’ What he had said was, that once the Treaty was accepted, I.R.B. methods would no longer be available, and they could not go wading in blood. . . . When he saw that report of his speech, he wrote from Kilkenny that it was a completely false misrepresentation of his words. That letter was published, but it was never referred to again. The misrepresentation was kept before the public but the

repudiation was ignored.” (Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis, October 28, 1931.)

The atmosphere in which these speeches were made was an atmosphere of semi-civil war; approaches to meetings were often blocked by trees and speeches punctuated by revolver shots in the air. Two pictures of meetings in the West of Ireland bring back this better than anything else.

Michael Collins on rising to address a Castlebar gathering within three weeks of Mr. de Valera’s fatherly caution against I.R.B. methods was, according to the *Irish Independent*, April 4, 1922, “cheered for some minutes, but directly he began his speech the storm of interruptions increased in its intensity. Young men worked themselves into a passionate heat with a breathless continuation of cries. Mr. Collins calmly surveyed them, now and then replying to a remark heard above the uproar. He said he hoped the people of Mayo would not support the men who tried to murder people by tearing up railway lines that morning. That was the Black and Tan method, but the Green and Tans were not going to be more successful than the others.

“‘I should,’ said Mr. Collins, ‘be rather working for you than talking to you. We have had centuries in which to talk. As a race I can only say that we have taken full advantage of the opportunity. The West—districts not far from that town were filled with people on the verge of starvation. It was now in Ireland’s power to secure that this state of things shall be ended and not occur again. The enemy was going—the enemy who brought privations and sufferings upon them. Were they going to accept the freedom that his departure gave them? Are you,’ he asked, ‘going to get back

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for yourselves the comfort and prosperity and freedom of spirit which these advantages give? ’ ’ ”

After loud cheers and counter cries, the incursion of a party in a motor car, a verbal duel between Collins and a local solicitor, allegations that local celebrities present had stoned Michael Davitt or alternatively brought out a brass band at Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, brandished fists, deafening uproar, Collins thundered over the heads of his interrupters:

“ The English deprived Ireland of freedom, of prosperity, language; robbed Ireland of the things of the mind and the spirit which mattered. After the lapse of so many centuries Ireland has recovered the power to get back what she lost.

“ We are now wrangling as to whether this is so or is not so. Some of you will point to our country being evacuated and are being convinced by facts. Some fearing in their timidity that the enemy may come back ask what guarantee we have that he will not return. Others again admit his departure, but object, or pretend to object, to the written terms of agreement made in regard to that departure, and they try to make you believe that the Treaty will mean a greater stranglehold on you than the machine-guns and the tanks and secret agents and police spies and alien administrators and unfriendly administrators had over you in the past. The common-sense people of Ireland do, however, attach much importance to facts. . . . Freedom is freedom, no matter what we call it. It is a fact, not a title. We struggled for it under many different titles throughout our history, and we struggled no less against the republican Cromwell than against the monarchical Elizabeth, and we suffered no less under the republican

Cromwell than under the monarchical Elizabeth. And we always knew what we wanted. We wanted the fullest amount of freedom that could be won at any time."

Uproar drowned Collins and he was unable to proceed. His lorry was rushed, revolvers were drawn on both sides and the meeting broke up. Shots were fired, after further confusion, by both sides; women fainted, others became hysterical, but the greater part of the crowd stood fast. Collins and his party remained on the lorry.

He briefly addressed the crowd:

"This is not the kind of freedom all my friends and I risked our lives for. If the people decide for the opposition policy they will find me behind them. I will still stand with the people, no matter what the decision is."

After an argument between Collins and a local Volunteer Commandant about a local shooting in which a woman had been injured, another Volunteer officer mounted the lorry and "proclaimed the meeting in the interests of peace." Collins and his party went back to their hotel, where another officer called and explained to Collins that the meeting was not proclaimed out of disrespect to him, but to avoid further bitterness. This did not prevent further argument and the searching of Collins's party for arms.

On Sunday, April 16, Mr. Arthur Griffith—having made his will and left a brief sealed message to Ireland in case of his death—went down to Sligo to defy a similar proclamation on one of his meetings and spoke from a military tender with an armoured car behind him and the tricolour over his head. Buildings commanding the approaches to the meeting-place were sand-bagged and held by Free State troops. Wires to Dublin

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were cut and the roads leading into Sligo blocked with trees. Earlier in the day shots were fired and two men wounded. Mr. Griffith delivered his speech to an enormous crowd and had an enthusiastic send-off as he left the town on the following day. Speaking to the people on the platform before his train left, he thanked them for the reception they had given him on the previous day and added:

“A challenge had been issued to the Government of Ireland that no Government could allow to pass. The challenge had been taken up on behalf of the people of Ireland and the right of free speech had been vindicated. It was for the people to decide what form of Government they wished to accept, and it was for the Government to ensure by all the power at its disposal that the people should be entirely free to choose. The liberty of free speech and free assembly had been asserted in Sligo, and by the same means the liberty for a free election would be vindicated on behalf of the people of Ireland. He gave them that assurance.

“He always considered himself the people’s servant, and his desire was that the people should have freedom to express their views. The Government of which he was the head was determined to see that the people got that right. . . . He concluded with special thanks to the loyal soldiers of Ireland who had been constituted the defenders of the people’s rights against irresponsible despotism.”

Mr. de Valera in the meanwhile had invaded Enniscorthy and Wexford and continued his dialectical barrage. Already there was talk of Civil War. At Enniscorthy Miss Mary MacSwiney said that if the Treaty went through it would be over the dead bodies

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of Irishmen, and that if there was Civil War as a result of the Acceptance of the Articles of Agreement "every drop of blood that is shed, every sorrow that comes to our country will lie on the souls and the heads of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith." To do her justice, she made out a better case than that, but the newspapers, staggered by her famous staying power in the Dáil, only said acidly, "in the course of a long address," or "also spoke," while irreverent American journalists and visiting American publicists after several sessions with the determined lady observed unsympathetically: "At home, we call that: the Bunk!"

At this same Enniscorthy gathering on April 17, de Valera declared that they would not have peace with England nor would they have peace at home by accepting the Treaty. The Constitution they were talking about was not free because it was bound by the Articles of Agreement, and if it did not correspond with that Agreement the House of Commons would be in a position to run a coach and four through it. "A lot had also been made about evacuation. When he was in London last July it was suggested to him, that if his name was got to an agreement, that immediately the troops would be got out. At that time it struck him there was something special in it. He said to himself that they wanted to get out their troops for some other reason, or else they thought it a good way of deceiving the people."

Besides the blocked roads, the revolver shots and the dialectical barrage there was a brisk and not always edifying battle raging on another front: the Press front, daily, weekly, established and mushroom. The daily Press was solidly and betimes unscrupulously anti-de

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Valera. Mr. Erskine Childers filled the columns of his weekly, *Poblacht na hEireann* (The Republic of Ireland) with a very effective propaganda. In this Collins and Griffith were the butts of criticism, resentment and ridicule that drew from Mr. Griffith the accusation that he and Collins were being marked down for assassination, and in the Dáil he angrily quoted Curran's: "You may murder us but you shall not intimidate us."

This was inspired by a blithe fable in a back corner, a pasquinade on the London negotiations that contained the suggestive words: "We'll not have this treaty executed. Let us rather execute the man who signed it for us behind our backs." Mr. Childers came down from the clouds in horror and sorrow that Mr. Griffith should take offence and indulge in such antics.

A pro-Treaty pamphlet was seized and burned; whereupon, Mr. Childers wrote two long articles to confute it, and said the raiders had wasted their time, most lamentable.

Shots were fired at Collins in a Dublin square—at least, Michael Collins happened to be passing at the time when shots were fired, but Mr. Rory O'Connor's Publicity Officer—quite truthfully as was soon proved—explained to the Press: "I wish to state definitely and emphatically that an attack on Mr. Michael Collins was not in any way intended or contemplated. He happened to be in the vicinity during the incidents at Parnell Square, and thus got implicated in the matter." *Poblacht na hEireann* was not so tactful: "It is evident that Mr. Collins hoped that it would create a first-class political sensation here, and that through it he believed he would secure the sympathy of the multitude, but the

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multitude seems to know the real Mr. Collins." The pro-Treaty Press insinuated that there had been a deliberate attempt to murder Collins.

This was all very sour play-acting on both sides; both were trying to keep their tempers, and both were quite conscious of the gunpowder barrel around which they were throwing matches, and both were quite willing for a peaceful settlement if only the one would give way and admit the rightness of the other. The fight for freedom during the five glorious years had made the fighters very conscious of common short-comings and they had had too much of each others' company in jails and internment camps. The urbane acidity of *Poblacht na hEireann* was countered by a very scurrilous campaign against Mr. Childers himself. His diary of his experiences in the South African War was ransacked for phrases to incite the multitude against him and much frivolous verse expended on him, while the fable that he was a British secret agent spread in public and private, and its authors began to believe it themselves.

The play-acting turned very rapidly from farce to earnest. Every day brought a new omen of the coming clash. The situation became complicated by the split in the I.R.A. and the troubles on the Ulster border, which spread to Belfast. The story of the I.R.A. split has been told at length by Piaras Beaslai and others, and does not belong to any study of Mr. de Valera. He afterwards explained his comparative silence by his hesitation that his words might be twisted against those he condemned. But he and Cathal Brugha both signed their names to the appeal of the Standing Committee of Sinn Fein that public meetings and speech should be free at the coming election. He also associated himself



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with a vigorous all-party condemnation of the murders of Protestants in County Cork.

On April 14 Rory O'Connor and about two hundred of his supporters seized the Four Courts for their headquarters and strongly fortified it with sand-bags and barbed wire. The Kildare Street Club and other buildings were also seized. An eminent lawyer interviewed by the Press admitted that Rory O'Connor might indeed want room for his men, but after all it would seem he had many other places that might have suited that purpose just as well. In the meanwhile the poor judges and lawyers could all go whistle, but it would be very ill-advised for the new Administration to take the place by force instead of providing the judges with alternative accommodation. The new Administration agreed with the eminent lawyer, for that is just what happened. About this time Mr. de Valera issued his famous Easter Proclamation in which the phrase occurred: "Ireland is yours for the taking. Take it."

The controversy spread across the Atlantic to the United States, where Treaty and anti-Treaty delegations now went. Speaking at a Republican demonstration in Philadelphia on Easter Sunday, April 16, Austin Stack said:

"England with her regular army and with her Auxiliaries and Black and Tans, tried her worst to reduce the Irish nation without success. The morale of our men was never higher, and the confidence of the English forces was not very great, when the Truce came in July last. Lloyd George sought it because he realised he could not win in the field, and so he decided to try other methods.

"President de Valera had to meet Lloyd George's

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peace manœuvres. He went to London and received the English proposals and refused to bear them to Ireland. And Dáil Eireann confirmed his rejection. But negotiations were reopened, and the plenipotentiaries went to London. They signed the Articles of Agreement against the terms of their instructions, and in spite of Mr. Griffith's definite pledge to the Cabinet on the previous Saturday that he would sign nothing. Mr. Griffith was told that he would split the country from top to bottom if he signed, and he promised not to do so. But he did, and if the country is split and if worse consequences arise the responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the men who took it upon themselves to sign away the nation's rights. If there are any 'wreckers' in Ireland these are the men who are endeavouring to wreck the ship of the Republic.

"But they will not succeed in the attempt. Nothing or nobody will be allowed to stand in the way of the Republic. Speaking here, I say to you that the Republic which was set up in 1916, ratified in 1918 and 1920, baptised in the blood of a thousand martyrs, still lives and will be maintained and defended so long as life remains or red blood runs in the manhood of our country."

This oration, according to contemporary accounts, was delivered to packed and enthusiastic benches, swelled by many who had been persuaded by "some clever lad" who had issued a paragraph to the papers that a Devoy-Cohalan counter-demonstration had been postponed. So the audience, or the part of it so deceived, missed the happy denunciations of de Valera as "a half-breed Portuguese Jew from Bruree," and contented themselves with cheering "the name of de Valera every

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time it was mentioned, booed that of Lloyd George, but showed a charitable attitude towards Collins and Griffith, and subscribed over 50,000 dollars to the movement for the Irish Republic."

Madame Markievicz interviewed Jim Larkin for over six hours in Comstock Prison and announced that he had the same aversion to a Free State tied to the British Crown as the devil has to holy water. On his release shortly afterwards, Jim was reported as roundly stating that Griffith had never "been one of us," and that he and Collins ought to be hanged with ropes from some public eminence. But Larkin at least had a deep personal grievance against Griffith who had never spared him, and never sank to the scurrility with which Devoy until the day of his death assailed de Valera, a campaign that forsook all decency or measure. Larkin, at least, on his return to Ireland threw all his influence against the Civil War.

Still there was no mistaking what John Devoy meant, and he never pretended to polish his phrases while he scalped a political enemy. The anti-Treaty Press in America sugared its venom, and in its bland blindness to the coming Civil War equalled its Irish colleagues: shots at barracks, British agents, perhaps Mr. Cope; shots at Collins, pooh, another publicity stunt. Miss MacSwiney, Father O'Flanagan and others carried on a vigorous campaign against Griffith, Collins, and the acceptance of the Treaty. Corpse-staking in the Easter Revolt and the Anglo-Irish struggle was an unedifying side-line; women who had lost their relatives in the past cabled Irish-American organisations who supported the Treaty forbidding them to use those relatives' names as they had "deserted the cause for which so-and-

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so had died"—even when it was notorious that so-and-so alive might also have been a deserter, a traitor and have had a mind of his own.

Even in Ireland those women members of the anti-Treaty Party whose sincerity in opposition to the Treaty and hatred of Civil War could not be questioned would not rise above the following appeal:

"... The wonderful solidarity of our nation has been broken by the signing of the Articles of Agreement and their approval by a majority in Dáil Eireann. . . . Those who hold to the Republic as they do to their faith cannot yield that faith to any threat. . . . Cannot some plan be adopted which will enable us all to unite and avert further civil strife? Already men have been killed. Bitterness is growing daily. . . . There can be no unity on the Treaty; why then force it? If we stand together the enemy will be powerless against us. . . ."



EVERY document of the time is a pointer to tragedy: On April 27, Thomas Johnson, Secretary to the Irish Labour Party, in the course of a letter to General Mulcahy wrote:

“ . . . The public of Dublin, if of no other place, have had the evidence of their senses during the past month or two to prove how military motor cars and lorries have been rushed at ‘auxiliary’ speed through the streets of the city; of ‘hands-upping,’ and searches of civilians by military men; of indiscriminate shooting—*i.e.* shooting at any moving object, after attacks or alleged attacks, to the danger of civilians in the streets or in their houses. . . . I would point to the stories given as evidence of the awful readiness to use the gun, quite apart from any evidence of intent.” Mr. Johnson then quoted Press accounts of officers commandeering cars and issuing proclamations against cattle-driving without authority from the civil courts, as moves in the direction of a military caste.

And pretty brisk moves towards two military castes, he might have added. Throughout the country two armies already faced each other. In Kilkenny the Free State forces drove their rivals from the city with a great show of armoured cars, and then after a general round-up laid siege to fifteen troops in Kilkenny Castle. “The

Free State commanders," according to Mr. Childers' organ, "delivered a massed attack on the Castle at dawn on the 3rd (May), which they continued for sixteen hours, machine- and Lewis-guns pouring what the Press describes as 'a hail of bullets' into the building from six or seven commanding positions. Under this fire the Free State troops tried twice to storm the building, but on both occasions were driven back with loss. Finally an armoured car was rushed through the main gate, and under the fire of its guns, directed at the windows of the Castle, the Free State forces effected an entrance at 9 p.m. and captured the fifteen defenders, all of whom had escaped serious injury, whereas ten of the Treaty troops were wounded in the several assaults on the position."

The same source also notes: "In Buncrana on the evening of the 4th, a party of Republicans having raided the Ulster Bank were returning when they encountered a party of Free State soldiers, who opened fire. One Republican soldier was killed and there were wounded on both sides. The Free State troops then called for reinforcements . . . were ambushed . . . three killed and seven wounded. . . .

"In addition to these casualties a Free State dispatch rider was fired upon and wounded near Dublin, and in Kilmor, Co. Galway, a Free State Brigadier and a private were wounded in an attack delivered by them upon a barracks. . . .

"Two barracks about to be occupied by Beggar's Bush forces were destroyed. . . .

"An interesting point about the casualties suffered by the Treaty forces is that many of the killed and wounded are Dublin men. . . . If any party is creating

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and spreading civil war, surely it is that party which dispatches men to invade a district and to attack local troops who have occupied local buildings. . . . Even from the pro-Treaty daily Press it seems to be clear that in most cases the Free State troops were the aggressors. Recent instances included the high-handed action of Commandant-General — in Galway. Accompanied by an armoured car he held up the city on the 3rd and demanded the surrender of the Customs House held by six Executive soldiers, threatening an attack if instant surrender were not made. . . . (Elsewhere) similar tactics were adopted, tiny garrisons being threatened by armoured cars and large bodies of troops if surrender were not made in ten minutes. . . . All such incidents should be impartially investigated in order that the responsibility should be placed upon the right shoulders.”

Time lends a piquant interest to such extracts, and an unconscious irony. And an equal irony to the virtuous protests of the opposite camp: “Mr. Childers makes a great parade both on the platform and in print of his own injured innocence,” wrote the *Free State* on March 25, “and of the venomous attacks that unscrupulous enemies have made upon him. He has not done so badly for all that. He has presumably been the author of the most inflammatory and irresponsible article that has appeared during the whole of this contest . . . the leader on Limerick which struck the keynote of Mr. de Valera’s speeches. If not actually its author, he is as Editor . . . responsible. . . . The people of Ireland, if peaceful and legal methods of settling their disputes are not accorded them, will hold responsible every man or woman who has by word or

deed incited to violence; and that responsibility will be no light one."

To deepen Mr. Childers' responsibility and mellow him, some light parodies on Yeats and Shakespeare quizzing him on his past oaths, martial exploits and the *Riddle of the Sands* were included. In a bitter article in the same issue, Mr. Kevin O'Higgins charged him with the authorship of Document No. 2, "the scheme of the professor turned politician." The same article said of de Valera:

"Patience, wisdom, tolerance, a great compassion for the multitude struck one as distinguishing marks of Mr. de Valera when the responsibility of national leadership was his. He seemed to constitute himself in a special manner the guardian of the civil population, and as well became a national leader, he allowed himself to draw no narrow distinction between those who gave and those who withheld support. One always felt that however others might lose their heads in the zeal of a new-found militarism, this man thought and spoke and acted for an entire people. . . .

"The man who faced facts last July and induced 'a selection from the left wing of the nation' to do likewise is now splendidly oblivious of facts. We are to 'remember our strength,' to 'go another round as the other fellow may not be able to stick it,' if unfortunately he does prove able to 'stick it' then it would be better to 'suffer until God strikes our enemies from the face of the earth' than 'subvert the existing Republic.' The Treaty is 'the most ignominious document that man ever set hand to,' to support it is 'national apostasy.' Last July the Republican oath bound one to 'do the best for the Irish people in any



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circumstances that arise,' now the army is incited to mutiny in defence of the Republic and 'civil war' is lightly spoken of as the 'path to freedom.'"

A deeper irony hangs round the following words of Kevin O'Higgins, deeper than that around those of Childers:

"The Provisional Government, which came into existence as a result of the majority vote of Dáil Eireann, is, according to Mr. de Valera, 'the new Castle'—an institution deserving only the hatred and contempt of Irish citizens. Irishmen are told that if in future they dare aspire to the fulness of their rights they will have to turn their swords against their own fellow-countrymen.

"In these rhetorical flights Mr. de Valera spurns facts.

"It would never do to tell the people that in future no man will hold power in Ireland except by the sanction of their votes, that no policy can be pursued in Ireland for a single hour which is not the expression of the majority will, that the majority must always henceforth be the determining factor in their political affairs, that at any general election the people can return candidates pledged to any policy that seems good to them.

"Mr. de Valera will not tell the people, what he knows to be true, that when Britain waved the stick of 'immediate and terrible war' the Treaty was robbed of any moral binding force, and that it is perfectly open to Ireland to consider it always in the light of her relative strength. Such talk would be sordid now, mere expediency, but last July we were asked to weigh well the possibility of a 'Sherman's Ride.'

". . . At the head of a section he cannot hope to

extract from the British what they were unwilling to yield to the whole. . . . The fury-ridden partisan of the wild words and bitter taunts, the leader of men whose methods are rapidly degenerating into emulation of the 'Black and Tans,' is not the man who presided over Ireland's destinies for the last three years, nor yet the man under whose leadership negotiations were embarked on last July."

In this epic of the Unique Dictator Erskine Childers plays no uncertain and inconsiderable part. He gave everything to Ireland so far as he understood Ireland: his death was inevitable, but his attempted moral execution an eternal blot and dishonour on Ireland. "It was an execution," said de Valera bitterly afterwards, "that would make our children the slave of slaves."

Consider well this noble, reputed Robespierre of a Childers dead by Irish bullets at fifty-two with but a few open years of militant service to Irish independence, a man ever growing and searching for the truth: simple, lucid, concentrated, charming, modest; a lover of adventure; a Unionist who died a Separatist; a great writer who could shake the British War Office and fix the howling oceans in imperishable phrases, and yet squander his time on technical and routine studies to-day mouldering in libraries and twopenny boxes: wielder of a formidable axe for ever lopping twigs.

More light is thrown upon this aspect of Erskine Childers in a remarkable tribute of his friend, Alfred Ollivant in the *Atlantic Monthly* of Boston in February 1923, evidently written under the emotion aroused by his tragic end some months before. A figure not unfamiliar to Dublin comes to life in a vivid sketch of the pre-war Erskine Childers already grey and lame but

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tackling, as a natural leader, the dangerous task of lashing down tackle to a broken masthead in a raging gale in the Baltic aboard his yacht the *Asgarde*, "a tussling wisp of humanity hanging overhead and swirling with the slow swirl of the mast against the tumult of the tempestuous sky."

Ollivant confirms the deep disillusionment that the Carson-Wilson intrigue had left on the mind of Childers in his bitter sayings: "Ulster is the key to the world," and again in reference to the same intrigue: "Of course it was completely successful and has dominated all British policy since and led to Sinn Fein and the Irish Rebellion, while incidentally you may see in it the worse features of the Peace Treaty and the scrapping of the Fourteen Points and a genuine League of Nations. It completely identifies Great Britain with Prussianism."

Thenceforward Ollivant finds him charming, reasonable but utterly irreconcilable, and might have added that had Henry Wilson's diaries been then common property, Childers would have had many more companions in this intransigence. There is magnanimity even in the bitterness, for it is noted that Childers with scrupulous fairness insisted that he only (in June 1919) suspected but could not prove Sir Henry Wilson to be the dangerous and obtuse intriguer he was. Thence by inevitable stages to the Childers of 1922 with his outcry to Ollivant about the Irish Treaty: "No one dies for Home Rule in any country. The thing MacSwineys and commoner men in millions die for—freedom—is not a thing that can be disguised under phrases and whittled away by limitation. Everybody knows what it is and *this* (the British terms) is not it."

In burning and feeling words Alfred Ollivant resur-

rects the Erskine Childers all his intimates have painted: "when our English papers wrote of him during the height of the trouble as 'a sinister figure' and stressed, as they loved to do, his intellectual qualities, they gave a childishly false impression of the simplest and most sincere of men. His intellect was the least of him, and its limitations his ultimate undoing. He was first, foremost, and all the time, a mystic, though probably an unconscious one who would, I think, in the days I knew him best, have defined himself as an agnostic. Nobody could be with him and not feel his spiritual apartness. He lived in a cloud of dreams and ideals remote from the world. . . . Had his mind been as good as his heart was big, he would have been one of the great world-forces of our times. . . . The good democrat had become merged in the dogmatic pedagogue. At last it was not the will of the Irish people that he sought, but what he believed was good for the Irish people. . . . God rest the tired and battle-worn spirit of the most gallant gentleman that ever Ireland has given to our earth."

Of his own part in the London negotiations Childers wrote in his own paper with a reference to the bitterness he aroused: "This vendetta bewilders and disgusts me. . . . But I acted as an honest Secretary as well as an open partisan, said what I thought on both sides and stuck to it." (March 22, 1922.)

On the night of March 29-30 the *Freeman's Journal* was raided by an armed party who served the following notice on the proprietors:

"You are hereby notified that it has been deemed necessary to suspend the publication of your journal, in view of statements made therein calculated to cause

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disaffection and indiscipline in the ranks of the Irish Republican Army.

“By Order of the Army Council,

“IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY EXECUTIVE.

“29th March, '22.”

Every piece of machinery was smashed with sledge-hammers, the protesting jaw of the Managing Editor punched, the premises sprinkled with petrol and set alight, and over 300 workers thrown idle. The offence of the paper was that it had published that morning an official report issued from the Free State Army H.Q. at Beggar's Bush Barracks on the I.R.A. Convention three days before. Compensation of £2600 was voted by the Dáil, the *Freeman* appeared almost at once as a typescript newspaper until it came out late in April as a 24-page paper with a huge streamer on its front page, bidding “Good Morning to Readers and Raiders.” This perhaps inspired an Editor in the South later to agree to publish whatever the Irregulars asked him on condition that his front page could have one uncensored streamer. They agreed but laughed wryly when they read: “Don't Believe a Word We publish this Week!” The *Freeman* was regarded, quite wrongly, as the semi-official organ of the Provisional Government, and thanks to the stubborn personality of its proprietor, Martin Fitzgerald, a Dublin business man, to whom any threat whether from Black and Tans or Rory O'Connor was an invitation to unbridled defiance, it had carried on a ferocious and very biased, not to say ungenerous, vendetta against both de Valera and Childers. Its caustic and disrespectful leaders had piqued the Dáil during the long Treaty debate, and feeling had run so

high that an armed Volunteer guard had been placed on the premises. During the Anglo-Irish struggle, its Editor and proprietor had been fined and imprisoned, the Black and Tans burned the business premises three times and once raided the paper and made things very lively for printers and staff. Dublin Castle's feelings towards it have been left on acid record by General Macready in his *Annals of an Active Life*: ". . . lastly, but by no means least of all, the offices of the *Freeman's Journal* were burnt—a very just retribution at the hands of their quondam friends."

Perhaps the Four Courts' imitation of the official literary style had moved the General, who was at this time doing his best to keep the peace behind the scenes. Other papers at this time suffered intimidation, but the *Freeman* remained the outstanding victim. Not all the Irregular leaders allowed themselves to be carried away by the hysteria of the hour. Cathal Brugha about this time visited the Editor of a well-known Irish newspaper and warned him that one of his staff had incurred so dangerous a resentment that he ought to be sent out of the country. Before he left, Brugha emphasised that this was a friendly warning and not a threat: "So far as my influence goes," he said, "no journalist shall ever be molested." And in public speeches Brugha spoke in similar strain.

Mr. Frank Aiken, one of the Irregular leaders whose record in the Civil War won him the respect General MacKeon had won from his enemies in the Anglo-Irish war, and afterwards Free State Minister of Defence under de Valera, said during the Public Safety Act debate in Dáil Eireann on October 16, 1931:

"At the time of the Treaty he would have liked to

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surround the Dáil and imprison the Deputies until they arrived at some solution that would have saved the country from war. When the Army representatives met to discuss the situation he did all in his power to keep them together until the Irish representatives would have discussed the Constitution. He had appealed that there should be no Army convention until these representatives had an opportunity of framing that Constitution. He remained under the Dáil Ministry for Defence and did everything possible to get the Army to obey the Dáil Ministry for Defence.

“At about May 1922, when the Republican forces in the North were endeavouring to protect Nationalists there, he with other officers felt that owing to being away from the disputes in the South, they were able to form a clear conception of the direction in which events were drifting and came to Dublin to endeavour to secure peace. As a result of conferences held between the leaders of the various parties the Pact was drawn up. He believed the Pact would have secured peace in the country were it not for the unfortunate killing of Sir Henry Wilson, which gave the British the excuse for again interfering in furtherance of their traditional policy. In the North they created bloodshed between Catholic and Protestant. He did all in his power to prevent the Civil War in the South, and his efforts led to his being imprisoned.

“He then appealed to the Provisional Government to declare to Great Britain that peace could not be obtained and that the Treaty could not be put through unless the oath of allegiance for deputies was abolished. At the end of the Civil War the I.R.A. and the Republican Government put forward proposals for peace which

were unanimously agreed to by the representatives of the Army and the organisation, but they were turned down."

Mr. Aiken then rounded off this version of history by a frank regret that the Civil War had ever occurred and some equally frank compliments and criticism of the I.R.A. on the lines made by Mr. de Valera and already quoted.

Speaking at Rathfarnham on Sunday, April 23, Commandant-General Rory O'Connor voiced with touching directness his quite different point of view. The Army was determined, he said, to maintain the Republic, no matter what it cost. He and his colleagues were accused of making civil war more than ever possible. It was a lie, and those who said it knew that it was. They had endeavoured in every way to preserve unity in the Army. Their latest effort was to send on April 14 proposals for reunifying the Army, to Dáil Eireann. These proposals were not even considered by the Government which called itself the Government of the Irish Republic.<sup>1</sup> It was not the Army Executive which brought civil war nearer, but those who were false to their oaths, and to what the Army stood for, and who were creating an army of their own for the purpose of forcing the Irish people into the British

<sup>1</sup> These proposals were forwarded by Liam Mellows to Dáil Eireann with a request for a reply to "these appended conditions" "not later than 12 noon on Sunday, 16th inst., to these headquarters." 1. To maintain the existing Republic. 2. That Dáil Eireann as representative of the Republic be the only Government of the country. 3. To maintain the Army as an Irish Republican Army under the control of an elected independent Executive. 4. Disbanding of the Civic Guard, the policing of the country to be carried out by the Irish Republican Army, as decided by the Executive of that Army. 5. All financial liabilities of the Army to be discharged, and future requirements met, by An Dáil. 6. No elections on the issue at present before the country to be held while the threat of war with England exists.



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Empire. He considered that in all Irish history there had not been a more dishonourable act. Referring to the Press, General O'Connor said it persistently misrepresented the views of the people. Freedom of the Press as understood by the Irish journals was freedom to publish only what suited them. They did not express the views of the people. The people were always right, and if permitted to have an election free from the threat of war they would vote for the maintenance and upholding of the Republic. Commandant O'Connor concluded by saying that if the Republican Army could prevent it there would be no civil war. If the people stood behind the Army, civil war would become impossible.

The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Byrne, summoned a Peace Conference of all parties, including Labour, at the Mansion House, but it broke up on April 29. Collins, Griffith and the Labour representatives made various proposals to meet Mr. de Valera's objections, all of which were refused. Collins and Griffith issued a detailed statement (Beaslai, Vol. II, pp. 385-389), concluded with a quotation from Lincoln, and said: "The Government of Ireland has now cast upon it the duty of seeing that the people of Ireland shall be free to vote their approval or disapproval of the Treaty signed by their authorised plenipotentiaries."



THROUGHOUT this time de Valera continued his public campaign spiritedly and energetically in the West of Ireland where he spoke to large and enthusiastic meetings at Tuam, Galway and Oughterard. Towards the end of April he returned to Dublin and spoke at Boland's Mills, where his feelings must have been mixed as old memories of his beginnings lurked behind his now familiar speech, an involved story of the negotiations, hints that the British evacuation was a sham, logic, declamation, appeals for postponement of the issue, criticism of a parliamentary register now rotten but good enough to build his beloved Republic on, all frigid, bewildering, moving betimes; rebukes for some act of violence; let England remove her threat of force; no popular sanction for usurped authority; army as last defence of nation entitled to prevent elections unless Britain pledged herself to respect whatever decision Irish people arrived at on valid register, then perhaps intervention of army would be tyrannical and immoral. No doubt when the grey mill loomed up behind him, he wished time could turn back to the outwardly more desperate days that he stood behind the flour sacks, a rifle in his hand and a rope round his neck, one of a minority in revolt but with all history behind him; not as now, nominal leader of a nation whose active will he was challenging, his considered policy for the movement

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he had led through so many dangers rejected by the majority and regarded with only half-polite disapproval by his more embarrassing allies.

Tim Healy called in to see and warn him, "as an expert in splits," that he would be a sorry man in twelve months' time, if he lent himself to force. De Valera very politely replied that he did not think so and that he had nothing to do with the army. "Harry Boland kept the door of de Valera's room and I left sensing tragedy," records the future Governor-General.

Tragedy indeed dogged every peace effort. A determined attempt by army officers from both sides to reach agreement on the basis of the acceptance of the Treaty, an agreed election, a National Government and army reunification broke down, but led to negotiations and the appointment of a Dáil Committee to explore further possibilities. Finally they found that they could reach agreement on everything but the issue of acceptance or non-acceptance of the fact that at that moment the majority of the people were prepared to give the Treaty a chance. This last Peace Conference definitely failed on the eve of the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis. But there was a more hopeful feeling in the air. The idea of a National Coalition seemed to offer a way of escape. No one dared to say at this stage: "Civil War or no Civil War, we must have our way." But the matches were dropping fast around the gunpowder barrel.

One speaker demanded a coalition in which his party could take "everything they could get and give England nothing." Another wanted a Republican constitution and "fight England on it." Then, to quote Mr. Childers' organ for May 25, 1922:

"Eamon de Valera brought matters to a head by

asking the President a straight question across the table, whether or not he wanted the co-operation of Republicans on the understanding that they were not committed to the Treaty and that the people should not be asked to commit itself to the Treaty. The President (Mr. Griffith) answered in a dozen curt and uncompromising words that 'if Mr. de Valera's proposal was that they should assent to the people being muzzled on the Treaty, he said, "No"; if he agreed not to obstruct further the Irish people in expressing their views, he said, "Yes."'

"The debate naturally slipped back to the party groove, but not before Cathal Brugha, in a speech of vehement simplicity, had said that he was sick of politics, that he would never fire a shot against comrades, and he preferred to die by an English or Orange bullet in the North, and that he urged unity on the basis of a Northern crusade. . . . Michael Collins rose and altered the whole aspect of the debate. It was a wonderfully clever speech, now combative, now friendly, now stressing the Republican ideal, now firm on the Treaty, candid in admitting the power of a minority to wreck the Treaty Government and cautious in hinting at concessions, but on the whole, so conciliatory in tone that it was welcomed by Eamon de Valera and led to the adjournment of the debate and fresh negotiations, this time between himself and the Republican leader."

After further negotiations, on Saturday, May 20, Collins and de Valera reached the famous Pact for a National Coalition Panel of both parties with the understanding that after the election the Executive should consist of the President, Minister of Defence, and nine other Ministers, five from the Free State and four

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from the Republican parties. The Pact was fiercely opposed by Arthur Griffith, who refused to be a party to it. It was at once denounced by Labour and other independent elements as political autocracy, a muzzling order and a document that prostituted patriotism to party. It alarmed the British Government, and Mr. Churchill relates that Collins was obstinate but embarrassed in his defence of it. Mr. de Valera, however, has always maintained that it was a last desperate effort on his part to avert Civil War. But the fierce feeling in Ireland, and, it may be, direct or indirect pressure by the British Government, drove Collins into practically throwing over the Pact on the very eve of the elections. The Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis gave its blessing to the Pact on May 22. Mr. de Valera, as will be seen from the statements given elsewhere in this book, at all events, kept the Pact in letter and spirit. And many otherwise hostile swallowed the Pact as the best of a bad job: it gave a comparatively peaceful election, which was held on June 16. The country repudiated the Pact and Mr. de Valera, for the figures were: Government, 58; anti-Treaty, 35; Labour, 17; Farmers, 7; Independents, 7.

The Irregulars, although with characteristic lack of imagination they resented for long this romantic description, with the exception of Rory O'Connor who declined to shy at even harsher labels, now lost all patience, broke off the secret talks with Collins to bring army unity and decided to "maintain the Republic against British aggression." But indeed the truce had been at best a troubled truce, while in the North pogroms and a minor civil war was already raging. De Valera, so far as he could, threw in private all his personal influence against the excesses of the wilder spirits of the Rory

O'Connor camp. To aid him was the great power of Cathal Brugha who, from the beginning of the crisis, had vigorously opposed the idea of a military dictatorship with which the Four Courts Executive was more than flirting. Collins had already come into possession of plans of theirs that satisfied him a definite plan of action against the remaining British forces was being seriously considered. Captured documents gave him increasing evidence of these developments.

General Macready in his memoirs afterwards revealed that during the end of June the whole issue hung in the balance. So alarmed were the British military authorities by the Pact and the unsettled conditions throughout the country that every preparation was made to safeguard their troops and assert their authority in the event of a general rising; that a proclamation was drawn up warning the people of Dublin that use would be made of all means to hand, including if necessary the shelling of Dublin; barbed wire and heavy artillery were held in readiness; and all officers living outside certain areas were warned to be ready at an hour's notice.

The best that can be said for the Four Courts was that in their rage they could not see beyond their noses; that in their fury at what they deemed a betrayal by a pack of politicians they forgot all they had ever learned; that they did not know when they had lost the support of the people; that in the phrase of Liam Mellows when he started to think in the rather doubtful seclusion of Mountjoy Jail: "they were absorbed into the movement—not educated into it," and "could only judge of the situation in terms of guns and men." But when candid friends told Mellows and his companions that

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their policy would land them into brigandage, defeat and ruin, they blundered on.

To the end, as Piaras Beaslai proves with ample chapter and verse, Collins was for conciliation even after the Civil War had started: "we will meet them in every way if only they will obey the people's will and accept the authority of the Government of the people." Collins's own view of the Pact may be quoted from the same authority in part:

"The country was face to face with disaster, economic ruin, and the imminent danger of the loss of the position we had won by the national effort. If order could not be maintained, if no National Government was to be allowed to function, a vacuum would be created, into which the English would be necessarily drawn back. . . . But at the eleventh hour an agreement was reached between Mr. de Valera and myself for which I have been severely criticised.

"It was said that I gave away too much, that I went too far to meet them, that I had exceeded my powers in making a pact which, to some extent, interfered with the people's right to make a free and full choice at the elections. It was a last effort on our part to avoid strife, to prevent the use of force by Irishmen against Irishmen. We refrained from opposing the anti-Treaty Party at the elections. We stood aside from political conflict, so that so far as we were concerned, our opponents might retain the full number of seats which they held in the previous Dáil. And I undertook, with the approval of the Government, that they should hold four out of the nine offices in the new Ministry. They calculated that in this way they would have the same position in the new Dáil as in the old. But their calculations were upset

by the people themselves, and they then dropped all pretence of representing the people." (Beaslai, Vol. II, p. 396.)

But not only de Valera, Rory O'Connor, Childers, Griffith and Collins were feeling the stress of the times. So centred on their immediate controversies had the Irish people become that they had almost forgotten about "England" in spite of many historical references during the innumerable speeches and much lurid scarification of Lloyd George. Mr. Lloyd George lay low and said nothing except to remark to Mr. Churchill:

"If the Free Staters insist upon a constitution which repudiated Crown and Empire and practically set up a Republic, we should carry the whole world with us in any action we took; but an issue fought on Ulster would not command united British opinion, still less world-wide support. . . . If we force an issue on these facts we shall be hopelessly beaten. There will be a great Die-Hard Shout which will last for a very short time, but we shall have no opinion behind us that will enable us to carry through a costly strangling campaign. Let us keep on the high ground of the Treaty, the Crown, the Empire." (*The Aftermath*, p. 338.)

Mr. Lloyd George had to listen to the tale of twenty shells and four hundred rounds which dispersed the I.R.A. at Belleek, but after a stormy election with a virtual repudiation of the Pact by Collins and the country on the eve of it, an event happened that upset all calculations, and the British Government, and all hope of peace. On June 22, a week after the Constitution had been published, as revised by a horrified British Cabinet, and de Valera and his allies had been beaten at the polls by nearly three to one, Sir Henry Wilson was



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shot dead in a London square. The last pathetic flash of his sword set Ireland alight, and drove the British Cabinet or a section of it stark, raving, staring mad.

At least General Macready states he was ordered to shell the Four Courts, and only soothed "this feverish impetuosity," this "panic and desire to do something, no matter what, by those whose ignorance of the Irish situation blinded them to possible results," with a fatherly lecture and the cooling demand for his orders in black and white. Or as Mr. Churchill himself put it afterwards: "The Cabinet, supported by the House of Commons, were resolved that whatever happened, Rory O'Connor must be put out of the Four Courts. The only question was when and how; and this must be promptly settled. Orders were actually sent to General Macready. However, this officer prudently, and as it turned out, fortunately, counselled delay; and at this darkest hour in Ireland came daybreak." (*The Aftermath*, p. 343.)

Before it came, however, there was another moving demonstration of the affection with which military gentlemen regard Mr. Winston Churchill, no matter how severely they may talk about him. The feverish impetuosity that had affected the British Cabinet, according to General Macready, spread to both sides of the Irish Sea. So while the feverish impetuosity in Whitehall now broke into words, the feverish impetuosity of Rory O'Connor broke into deeds that made the Provisional Government feverish and impetuous too. On Monday, June 26, Mr. Churchill nailed the Irish Government and people to his interpretation of their pro-Treaty vote in these words:

"... Hitherto we have been anxious to do nothing

### *From Pacts to Guns*

to compromise the clear expression of Irish opinion. But now this Provisional Government is greatly strengthened. It is armed with the declared will of the Irish electorate. It is supported by an effective Parliamentary majority. It is its duty to give effect to the Treaty in the letter and in the spirit, to give full effect to it and to give full effect to it without delay. A much stricter reckoning must rule henceforth. The ambiguous position of the so-called Irish Republican Army, intermingled as it is with the Free State troops, is an affront to the Treaty. The presence in Dublin, in violent occupation of the Four Courts, of a band of men styling themselves the Headquarters of the Republican Executive, is a gross breach and defiance of the Treaty. From this nest of anarchy and treason, not only to the British Crown, but to the Irish people, murderous outrages are stimulated and encouraged, not only in the twenty-six counties, not only in the territory of the Northern Government, but even, it seems most probable, here across the Channel in Great Britain. From this centre, at any rate, an organisation is kept in being which has branches in Ulster, in Scotland, and in England with the declared purpose of wrecking the Treaty by the vilest processes which human degradation can conceive."

Mr. Churchill then, on behalf of the British Government, issued an ultimatum to the Provisional Government:

"If it is not brought to an end . . . we shall regard the Treaty as having been formally violated . . . take no further steps to carry out or legalise its further stages . . . and resume full liberty of action. . . ."

This speech was fiercely resented in Ireland, and even Tim Healy admitted "the impatience of Mr. Churchill

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... made it arguable that he was the instigator of attack." But in the meantime Rory O'Connor—who had denied any responsibility for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson, with such sincerity that he had pained but convinced both General Macready and Mr. Bonar Law—kidnapped General O'Connell, Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army. On the very day of Mr. Churchill's speech, a combined meeting of the Dáil Cabinet and the Provisional Government had decided to issue an ultimatum to the Four Courts. Arthur Griffith told P. S. O'Hegarty at the time in reply to a question as to whether it was not unfortunate that the Provisional Government ultimatum had coincided with Mr. Churchill's speech:

"Yes, it was, but it was pure coincidence. . . . When O'Connell was kidnapped we did decide to move, and the order was given. Then came Churchill's speech, and we wavered again. Some of us wanted to cancel it. But we said that we had either to go on or to abdicate, and finally we went on."

At midnight on June 27 Free State troops surrounded the Four Courts, and an ultimatum was served on Rory O'Connor demanding the evacuation of the building and the surrender of General O'Connell by 4 a.m. Towards dawn Dublin was shaken by the booming of the guns as they shelled the surprised but defiant garrison, and Civil War had begun.



EVEN to-day the wounds of the Irish Civil War fester long after its dead have turned to dust or withered to nothing in their quick-lime shrouds. Its destruction was great in damage to property, in loss of life, in disillusion. Afterwards many hours and much invective were spent in discussing whether the material ruin should be reckoned in tens of millions or hundreds. In the pages of Peadar O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open*, in Francis Carty's *Legion of the Rearguard*, in Patrick Mulloy's *Jackets Green*, three Irish writers from different viewpoints have written from first-hand experience of the physical and spiritual ordeal through which a riven army and a sundered movement then passed, and few readers of their poignant pages, even if Ireland is to them only a name on a map, can escape the feeling that the deepest wounds of the Civil War were spiritual wounds that will not be healed until the last of the Civil War generation is long forgotten.

The Civil War began with sporadic murders and dragged its numbing course through a ghastly caricature of the 1916 insurrection and the Anglo-Irish struggle until it spluttered out some time before William Cosgrave had saved Ireland from chaos and irretrievable defeat, before Kevin O'Higgins had laid the foundations of the Ireland of to-day and before Mr. de Valera had taken upon himself the odium of a conflict he had first

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tried to avert and then circumscribe, by assuming a formal responsibility. Defeated in both efforts he then turned with a remarkable courage to salvage what he could from the ruins of his movement. Mr. de Valera himself summed up his position in a letter to a sympathiser while the Civil War still simmered: he was condemned to watch the Civil War, he wrote, through a wall of glass, powerless to intervene. And this was true.

The tragedy lay, as the last chapters showed, in a wave of war neurosis; in the final failure of the leaders and representatives of the Irish people to face a given situation with unanimity and decision; in personal feuds and the defeat of all efforts from the better elements on both sides to win a toleration and a fair trial for the Treaty; in the very humanity and, it may be, in the weariness of Michael Collins who had carried the Terror on his back; in the refusal to see the other side, even the British side; in the honest fanaticism of Rory O'Connor; in inexperience, in overwrought nerves, and in the fear to be thought afraid; in the last-minute blustering of British politicians: but above all, in the failure to find agreement on the honourable basis of facing the situation made by the signing of the Treaty.

Events have justified such a view. But this is not to say Mr. de Valera was wrong. He could defend himself if he wished in the words of the none too sympathetic Professor Alison Phillips about Document No. 2: "It is possible to regret that the British Government, having once made up its mind to surrender, did not frankly recognise the Irish Republic on some such terms as these. To have done so would not have exposed the Crown to any greater humiliation than it has suffered, nor Great Britain to any dangers from which the actual

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treaty preserves her, while Ireland might have been spared the ruin, desolation and bloodshed of another year of fratricidal strife."

The worst that can be said of Mr. de Valera is that he did everything but face the given situation.<sup>1</sup> That he tried to avert the Civil War is clear from his own words already quoted; that his motives in hesitating to repudiate Rory O'Connor and his militants were good and understandable ones—the preservation of unity and a hope that thereby he could avoid a fratricidal outbreak—must to-day be undisputed; but any observer of his part in the crisis must retain doubts as to where the politician, playing for position and trying to save his face, ended and the idealist and the patriot began. This doubt, however, cannot be confined to Mr. de Valera and must be entertained about his equally distinguished brother Celt, Mr. Lloyd George.

Deep was the content of tragedy Eamon de Valera was condemned to watch through a wall of glass.

"The first shell that was fired at the Four Courts blew Mick Collins sky-high!" chattered the Dubliners as the Civil War broke on the Dublin quays. "Why didn't he leave Rory O'Connor alone? What harm was he doing there?" And round them as they chattered screamed the voices of Free State and Republican Die-Hards: "Fight to a finish!" Into the new Free State Army flocked angry men who, a day before the Irregular challenge had fired them, had weighed the issue with troubled minds. Under the flag of the attacked Four Courts gathered men who had gone off with a curse for the leaders who had squabbled among themselves and misled and betrayed the men who with

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix VI.

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set teeth for two long years had fought the British to a standstill; no looters, brigands or riff-raff, but perplexed and angry men flocking under a flag dearer to them than their lives, living symbol of a nation's battle for centuries. Griffith, sick to the soul, cursed de Valera as the guns boomed on. In the Dublin streets whispers gathered and questions grew: why had the Provisional Government not waited two days longer at least when the Dáil was due to meet? Why had it reversed engines so suddenly, and attacked with such short warning the Irregular Headquarters with whose leaders Collins and Mulcahy had, by the request of the Dáil, been in friendly parley? De Valera could not be blamed: the armed attack had driven him and the whole political Republican party into support of the Four Courts. "Force to force!" answered the defenders of Collins and Griffith: two rival Governments cannot exercise power in the same area without a clash: the Republican resistance to the popular will was a war on the people. A Provisional Government proclamation borrowed the ill-omened catch-cry: "A war to make Ireland safe for democracy."

Poor Democracy! Its representatives cooled their heels as they waited in Dublin for the Dáil to meet, and went on waiting. For the Dáil never met until the Civil War had half-killed democracy, though, perhaps, democracy deserved it. Five times the Dáil was postponed, but it finally met on September 9, and a deputy said cynically to angry protesters and troublesome formulistic cranks who raised questions about no authority from Parliament for the attack on the Four Courts: "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just, but nine times he who gets his blow in fust!" But by then there was not much heart in the questioners, and

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Eamon de Valera was a fugitive away in the South; the Republican benches were empty; and Mr. Laurence Ginnell refused to take the oath and was thrown out.

De Valera was a fugitive. For with all hope gone as the shells crashed around the Four Courts de Valera took a step that made him formally, but no more, responsible for the Civil War. During the second day's fighting it was announced that he had rejoined his old battalion of the I.R.A. at a post in Dublin, while, in his first pronouncement issued after the Civil War broke out, he stated clearly that there were points of disagreement between Rory O'Connor and himself. This statement was afterwards underlined by captured correspondence published in a White Paper by the Free State Government in which de Valera admitted he had made a mistake in not repudiating Rory O'Connor's defiance of Dáil Eireann. His presence was reported at the time in several of the O'Connell Street positions, a mournful and dignified figure, still hoping against hope that he could localise the outbreak, muttering to himself, a revolver in his listless hand: "Brother against brother!" Until near the end he remained in the shell-swept O'Connell Street area, until near the end with its death-roll of 65 and 270 wounded, 25 buildings in ruins and Cathal Brugha, a dying man, who had marched out to die alone as a solemn protest after ordering a general surrender and urging his companions to save themselves.

Cathal Brugha stood alone in the flames of a crumbling building, and those who could still see him from the roadway said his face was strangely peaceful, a half-smile on his rugged face. An ambulance man drew up outside and waved a white flag. Brugha lowered his revolver and listened to an appeal to sur-



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render and quietly refused. Then he appealed to the ambulance man to go away quickly as there were mines inside the building. He rushed from the swaying hotel out into the street with his eyes on the Free State troops behind the sand-bags, out towards the nearest Free State post. Red Cross workers called out to him to stop and save himself. "Never, never," he cried. He rushed on, firing his revolver as he came. The Free State troops called out to him to halt as he came, some of them crying out:

"For God's sake, Cathal, stop!"

They fired at last, and he fell with mortal wounds.

It was one of the few flashes of splendour in this midden of blood and bile.

But the splendour of de Valera is brighter yet, for here he shows that supreme moral strength that alone could have upheld him through the inferno into which he had to descend and journey long before he could rebehold the stars of amity and peace. Truly to him may be applied the words he himself has spoken of Lincoln: "We esteem him for the love of truth which through all the vicissitudes of life inspired him, whether he was on the farm or in the street, in the courts or in the Capitol; for the charity which embraced even those who were ranged in battle against him; for the confidence in the ultimate triumph of right which upheld him in the darkest hours of the Civil War."

Again it is not unjust to find a personal echo of his own ordeal in these days in the same tribute to Lincoln: "the moral burden of a war which because of the human suffering involved weighed with crushing force on a sensitive mind." In the thick of the O'Connell Street fighting one of the Republican fighters offered him a gun

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and told him to shoot high if he didn't want to hit the enemy, and de Valera turned on him so stern and terrible a look of reproach and agony that he flushed scarlet and fell silent.

On de Valera had fallen a harder task than 1916. Then, without dishonour, he could take the easy exit of the firing-line. Now, in the very interests of the fighters, over whom he threw the mantle of his leadership, he had to stand aside. In a similar position a Masaryk or a Lincoln is applauded. As the Civil War went on, with its roll of executions, and later in prison, when with supreme courage he refused to hunger-strike, de Valera held to the most thankless post to which conviction and circumstances have driven a leader.

And de Valera wandered in disguise through the South, hunted, inspiring the flying columns, escaping by minutes again and again. . . . The order ran he was to be seized "when and where found." Lurid threats were made by the raiders as to his possible fate. But he passed them several times in an open car. De Valera's mask was simple: he grew a beard and shed his glasses! When the news of Griffith's death reached him he broke down and wept, while the news of the death of Michael Collins equally moved him. His first act on becoming President of the Free State Executive Council was to point out the medallions of Griffith and Collins in the room in which he worked and say sadly: "Those men were my comrades."

The Civil War is a series of spectacular rushes by the Free State Army southwards after the fall of the Four Courts and the end of the O'Connell Street fighting, swoops by sea on the southern towns, grandiose and almost bloodless battles in the Dublin hills, all relieved

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at first by a certain picturesque attitudinising on both sides. There is even a touch of chivalry; not everyone is anxious that his aim should be unerring; by all means let the other side fire first, and may their aim be as wide of the other's vitals as ours. Then the war darkened and Dublin had its fill of funeral processions and street ambushes, and fifty thousand Free State troops swept from Donegal through Connacht, from Leinster through Munster. Limerick, Waterford, Tullamore, Castlereagh, Kilkenny, Listowel, Kilmallock, with a crackle of machine-guns and a roar of heavy artillery, fell before the new army. A final landing at Youghal, Passage West and Union Hall and Cork fell, while the Irregulars fled with burning barracks, damaged bridges and all their transport behind them. By August 12 the Free State Army had swept all before them, with many wounded and a small but growing death-roll. An elaborate coup to isolate Dublin and create a diversion in the rear by blowing up the city bridges was frustrated by the Free State Intelligence. A darker spirit invaded both sides. No one could trust the other. Men changed sides daily, and into the defeated Republican ranks a bitter feeling of isolation flowed. It was worse than the old days of the struggle against England, worse than the Black and Tans, and so in their despair sections of the Republicans declared a war on the civil population and the nation they thought in their despair had betrayed them.

Blacker became the hearts of the Free Staters, for two deadly blows smote them in the hour of their spectacular victories. The great heart of Griffith broke for ever, and within a fortnight Michael Collins fell fighting in an ambush. Behind the coffins of Griffith and Collins

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marched the half-unknown Free State Ministers, weary and stubborn men, soon isolated in their sand-bagged offices, while bombs and bullets howled in the streets, and the Civil War turned to a long demoralising guerilla struggle with blazing country mansions, attacks on railways, shivered viaducts, a terror without and a terror within the jails of the Free State where sadistic experts vied with the scum that flocked in the wake of Republican and Free Stater. Then inevitable reprisals and counter-reprisals, executions, and final attrition into defeat for the Republican cause.

That is what de Valera watched through the wall of glass, and knew, as others bitterly knew for the first time, that there are darker depths within the heart of Ireland than her bitterest enemy had ever dreamed.

Beside him moved the chivalrous and doomed Erskine Childers, who prayed for death in this war that might clear his name; weighing for a moment whether he should not resign as he feared the great Childers myth was a menace to the cause of his heart; in a few fights, the last to retreat with his toy revolver that he admitted would never kill anyone, but added that was small matter since he felt he must die in this last fight. Mostly at his old work as a publicist in any case, most courteous and most meticulous; to-day, an apology to the Free State forces because he had spread an inaccurate report; to-morrow flying before them with his small printing press, but not in such a hurry that he cannot write nobly of Griffith: "death stills the bitterest controversy."

Or a lecture to his companions in arms on their slackness or prolixity. And finally he falls into the hands of his none too generous foes because he must ignore warnings and travel towards Dublin to find some documents to

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clinch that argument he never dropped. So in the Wicklow hills he was caught as he walked into his boyhood's home past the careful watchers who knew he must come there some day. And with little more ceremony than a Black and Tan execution of a prisoner trying to escape he was shot—and the great Childers myth buried for ever. But there was a little more ceremony, it must be conceded: just time enough for Erskine Childers to deliver a characteristic speech to his court-martial: thorough, moving—and to shake hands with his firing-party. And as he fell rose that heart-cry of Kevin O'Higgins: "Executions are terrible, but the execution of a nation is more terrible."

By the May of 1923 the struggle was over. It was a miracle that the Free State had won, but won it had. Liam Lynch, the most militant of all the Republican leaders, fell on a southern hillside. Austin Stack was captured in a field in County Limerick with documents urging that further hostilities were useless. He was on his way to a conference to discuss calling off the Civil War when he was arrested.

After the O'Connell Street surrender he had fled from Dublin southwards and taken part in some of the fighting. He had watched the growing venom of the war deeply disturbed, and he now feared it would sink to sporadic and murderous vendettas. On the death of Collins he wrote to his relatives saying that his heart was broken the way things had developed; when Stack was free again he said in public: "Michael Collins was almost a great man."

On April 27, de Valera and Frank Aiken issued a Cease Fire Order. The Civil War had already collapsed. The arms were dumped and the vanquished vanished

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to their homes. In another order de Valera added with rhetoric and invocation of Heaven: "Seven years of intense efforts have exhausted our people. . . . Other means must be sought to safeguard the nation's right." Peace negotiations were opened between Cosgrave and de Valera, but they broke down on the surrender of arms, the oath question and differences of opinion between Mr. Cosgrave and Mr. de Valera on the Free State Constitution. Mr. Thomas Johnson, Leader of the Opposition and the Labour Party in the Dáil, however, declared his sympathy with Mr. de Valera's proposals, especially the removal of test oaths. The Labour Party had already taken the oath as a formality implying no obligations beyond those of citizenship and with several defiant reservations. Mr. Cosgrave announced he would hold a free election.

On August 15 de Valera came out of hiding. De Valera had persuaded his party and supporters to try the issue at the polls. He was again selected as a Republican candidate for Clare. The approaches to his meeting-place in the square at Ennis, the scene of his triumph in 1917, were held by watchful Free State soldiers. It had been announced that he would speak and the square was full. An open car drove up and de Valera got out, pale and weary. He mounted the platform and a great storm of cheers broke out. It was just two in the afternoon and a band that had played him to the platform stopped. A sympathiser whispered to Mr. Hugh Martin, the famous special correspondent: "Heaven alone knows the things that man has prevented!" He spoke a few sentences in Irish and his voice was clear and strong, though trembling now and then. He spoke in English:

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“ We have never stood for destruction. I have come here to tell you that I have never stood for destruction. I have never stood for brother's hand being raised against brother. I have always preached one gospel, the one and only gospel that if we stand together and are united, we can achieve complete independence. . . .”

An armoured car moved slowly through the crowds. A circle of Free State troops closed in round the platform and fired three volleys of blank over the heads of the crowd as they came. In the panic de Valera was knocked flat on the platform and lay stunned. Wild shrieks of terror continued, and a stampede emptied the square as the troops went on firing. Banners and papers lay on the ground. De Valera was arrested and hurried to the car, and then to the barracks. He was taken to Dublin under a heavy guard and held a prisoner until June 1924.

In the General Election he headed the poll in East Clare and his supporters won forty-four seats to Cosgrave's sixty-three.



OUTWARDLY the situation on de Valera's release in the summer of 1924 was just the same as after any other civil conflict: the victors had all the spoils, all the haloes and a high sense of their own righteousness, while the losers were dispirited, bitter, leaderless and without a policy. Seventy-seven Republicans had been executed, a hunger-strike of ten thousand internees had broken down, in hopeless defeat, their Press was small and sporadic, and Cosgrave and his allies had beaten them at the polls again by three to one. It is true that the Republican vote in spite of civil strife, disillusion and the utmost vigour in the propaganda of its opponents remained considerable, so considerable that had de Valera united with Labour, he would have had only four votes less than Cosgrave, and even against the combined Cosgrave – Farmer – Independent vote a respectable minority.

But the Republicans were abstentionist and declared they would never take the oath or have anything to do with the Free State political institutions. And Labour and de Valera were not playing just then, for Labour was, with its own reservations, pro-Treaty and resentful of the savage Republican reproaches against its leaders. Moreover, the country, in general, was behind Mr. Cosgrave and his Ministers who had won against heavy odds, given Ireland settled Government, defended the



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Irish interpretation of the Treaty with evident results against the more narrow British view of its powers, and were carrying through their own social and economic policies. So in resources, in results, in men of ability and will the minority were poor and their prospects poorer.

In all but two things, the record of the Cosgrave Government was so creditable and its achievements so evident that its long continuance in office was not surprising: the Ulster Boundary and its conservative social and economic programme. The Cosgravians asked indignantly, and with full justification, a question that could be answered only with an unqualified affirmative: within living memory have conditions in this country ever been better? Land Purchase had been completed, the Shannon Scheme that provided Ireland with electric power carried through, and the financial credit of the Free State stood high.

The dream of Michael Collins that Ireland would reach full Dominion status, that England had renounced any claim to control her destinies in England's interests, and that the British Commonwealth was becoming the nucleus for a real world League of Nations was coming true.

After the Statute of Westminster, Mr. Patrick McGilligan, Minister of External Affairs, could claim as he spoke in the Dáil in July 1931:

"The only difference which I can see in the constitutional position of the Free State now and what it might be under a declared republic amounts to this—that at the moment there is a constitutional monarch who is supposed to represent the will of the people of this country. In the other situation there will be somebody called the President, also supposed to represent the

will of the people of this country. . . . Deputy de Valera wound up by saying that he regards this country as a separate nation in no way dependent on British statutes. I have said that at three Imperial Conferences, asserted the separateness of the nationhood of this country . . . and asserted that we were never in the past and were not going to be dependent on a British statute for that separateness. . . . There is the single person of the King. We might say there is a single physical crown upon his head, but outside these two items there is no question of unity as between members of the Commonwealth. The King moves and acts in relation to Irish affairs as Irish Ministers tell him to move and act . . . while Irish Ministers cannot tell him what he is to do except in relation to Irish affairs. . . . That is where we have progressed from the 1921 standpoint."

Mr. de Valera, indeed, has admitted publicly that more has been gained under the Treaty than he had ever thought possible.

The Ulster Boundary Crisis, it is true, shook the Cosgrave Government badly and drove many of their supporters towards Mr. de Valera. The first Article of the Treaty constituted the whole of Ireland as the Free State. Article 11 gave Northern Ireland a month's grace, during which time it had the option to withdraw. It exercised this option twenty-four hours after the Treaty was signed. It was further promised in the Treaty that if the Six County Government exercised this option, a Boundary Commission of three persons should be set up to determine "in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland."

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No attempt was made to set up this Boundary Commission until the autumn of 1925 owing to the refusal of Northern Ireland to appoint a representative. Collins and Griffith had signed the Treaty because they believed this Commission must mean the cession of Tyrone, Fermanagh and large areas in Down, Derry and Armagh to the Free State, and that this might well bring the union of all Ireland very quickly about. Sir James Craig, on the other hand, recognised the Treaty when it suited him, told the British Government to go to Hell when it didn't, claimed that the Commission was a breach of a Lloyd George pledge to him, and just got what he wanted. Lord Birkenhead, although he admitted "we offered the Free State representatives a certain consideration for their signatures," claimed the task of the Commission "was not to re-allocate disputable but to adjust inconvenient boundaries." (*Birkenhead, Last Phase*, pp. 236-240). To be quite blunt, popular opinion in the Free State has held that Mr. Lloyd George threw a fairy mist over the minds of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins in his final conversations with them, nor has he been held in less esteem for that, for the popular legend there has always pictured Mr. Lloyd George as a mesmeric and dangerous personage with whom no Irish politician has the ghost of a chance unless the Irish Sea is between them. Mr. Lloyd George might, to be sure, retort that he is not responsible for the subsequent events which made the Ulster Boundary decision.

This suspicion of trickery deepened with the final outcome of the Boundary Commission towards the end of 1925. The British Government appointed Mr. J. R. Fisher to act for Ulster, a South African Judge, Mr. Justice Feetham, was nominated Chairman, and Dr. Eoin

MacNeill was the Free State representative. The Commission visited Ulster and the Free State representative resigned. According to the *Morning Post* the other Commissioners had decided to give part of County Donegal to Ulster. A compromise was patched up. From the British point of view it was a generous and sensible settlement, even more generous than the Treaty: things remained as they were; what Sir James Craig had he held; while the Free State's liability for a share of National Debt under Article 5 of the Treaty was cancelled.

This gave President Cosgrave victory, but won him no gratitude. It struck at the traditional Nationalist hatred of Partition, now legalised, and many wished they had stood in the first instance behind Mr. de Valera. After all, Sir James Craig was not so different to Mr. de Valera: he said the same thing until everyone was sick of hearing it, went on saying it, and got what he wanted.

The Cosgrave retort to this was expressed tersely in 1933 by Mr. Batt O'Connor, one of Michael Collins's closest friends, when he said in reply to an election speech of Mr. Robert Barton:

"What happened? The national strength was divided. Mr. Barton and Mr. de Valera refused to stand by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. They stood outside the Provisional Government. They refused their aid in all the difficulties of setting up a Government and restoring law and order after the departure of the British. They fought a civil war with those who shouldered that responsibility. . . . Mr. Cosgrave was now taunted with his inability to fight a second civil war over clause Twelve with the solid united forces of the Orangemen." (*Irish Independent*, January 1933.) Or

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Party in 1917, he could think of no better way of damaging de Valera than by giving orders to his organ, the *Freeman's Journal*, that all de Valera's speeches should be given verbatim. De Valera, to be sure, sometimes reads very badly, but it is difficult to listen to him unmoved. He is dangerous; you feel he means what he says although what he means is not always so clear. He is no Grattan, no Pearse, no Connolly, no Larkin, no Kettle, not even a Burke. At times, he is dull, but in his worst speech the fire gleams through the ice.

If you are a cynical or detached listener, you may be unjust to de Valera: he knows now what John Dillon thought he would never learn: all the politician's tricks. He can say nothing for hours; play to the gallery with the air of an Archangel whiling away the intervals on Judgment Day before Omniscience gives verdict; lead his audience to the point he wishes, and stop. He can sometimes most charitably be compared to a Lloyd George with a conscience, and here is one occasion:

At a meeting in Cavan on January 25, 1925, Mr. de Valera repeated that no decent Republican would ever enter the Dáil. No man who stood for the independence of the country or who had any sense of national and personal self-respect would go and take an oath to a foreign king. There was more danger now than there had been at any time that he could remember of the last conquest being completed. There was going to be a great Imperial advance in this country this year. They were going to have Royal visits—the Prince of Wales and others.

If they came as the King of Belgium, the President of the United States, or anyone else who came as the ruler of a foreign State, they could respect them as much as

they pleased, and give them the respect due to their positions; "but you don't want a foreign king coming here who claims to rule this country and who has no right to it."

They had been asked what their policy was. That was being asked to try and turn the people's attention from what the policy of their opponents was. Republican policy was the same as it was when the people elected Sinn Féin representatives in 1918.

Others had told them that the Treaty was the stepping-stone to liberty. The fate of those gentlemen was that they were now out in the cold, neither Republicans nor Free Staters.

Those who had said that within the Constitution they could work for their liberty had lied, for it was a shackle on their limbs. When he was speaking in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1922, continued Mr. de Valera with his usual persistency, he tried to show them the barriers that would be before those who were going to continue the fight for Irish freedom. He told them that it was not the foreign soldiers or the English Ministers the barrier would be formed by, but by Irish soldiers and Ministers, and that it was through the blood of these they would have to wade if they wanted to secure freedom. That was a warning not a threat, but the newspapers misrepresented him as saying that he was threatening to wade through Irish blood. The Treaty was a victory for Imperialism.

They were told recently that laws were to be brought in against treason. He had never been a willing subject of England's King. They owed no allegiance to the Free State that had been forced upon them and would never render it.

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ask, does this last Mr. de Valera appear, in what phrase, in what word? It must be admitted in not one, and to soothe the exasperated reader, it may be added that from the Treaty crisis onward Mr. de Valera too often reminds the impartial onlooker as remarkably like Tom Sawyer explaining loftily to Huckleberry Finn as they planned to rescue the nigger Jim from captivity, that it was no use stealing the key of his prison from Uncle Silas, striking off Jim's chains with a chisel and clearing off down the river. No, a more elaborate plan must be evolved, spiders, rope-ladders, a whole romantic and thrilling paraphernalia of rescue, a fine plan, in Huck's phrase, "that would get us all killed into the bargain."

But let the exasperated reader now remember two things: the rapidly changing background of the Ireland sketched with some detail in previous chapters, and then some night turn on his wireless and listen to Mr. Baldwin or to Mr. Lloyd George, preferably on some occasion that deeply moves either speaker, and then in cold print some months after try to recapture the spell that held him as they spoke. He will be more charitable to Mr. de Valera. Behind the speech just quoted lay the Civil War which still poisons the public life of Ireland, changing circumstances, the imperceptible but irresistible pressure of the new political freedom in Ireland. Behind it too lay the presence and personality of a man who gives, whether in private or as he doggedly continues his argument in a great American city, or in a small Irish town, at the ebb of his fortunes, to a few hundred people a sense of power, grace, and reserve dead on the printed page.

The Cosgrave party are not blameless for some of the worse features of their Republican opponents, for from

the beginning of 1922 their propaganda was very often scurrilous, their language was inexcusably brutal, while their open contempt for the intelligence and capacity of Mr. de Valera antagonised any fair-minded judge, and led in the end to their own undoing. It is quite true that in the early part of the Civil War they had lived behind barbed wire in danger of their lives in anger and isolation; that the Republican Die-Hards had spared neither their relatives nor their property, for Cosgrave's uncle, Kevin O'Higgins's father, had been shot dead and Mr. Cosgrave's house, among many others, had been burned to the ground, while even more ghastly outrages had occurred; that every peace overture was received with moral indignation, involved argument and personal abuse; that half-a-dozen men and an untried and hastily raised army had won victory over enormous odds and built up a new State.

But, after all, the dishonours of the Civil War were fairly even, the ruthlessness of the executions had more than squared accounts, while no one in his senses could believe that Mr. de Valera had wanted to destroy Ireland or was a nincompoop.

In 1926 the struggle entered a new phase, for Mr. de Valera now broke with his I.R.A. allies<sup>1</sup> and Sinn Féin openly. Or, to be more exact, with a very elaborate explanation of his reasons, he announced he would enter the Dáil if the Oath of Allegiance were removed. He would accept the existing situation without saying so. The clash came at the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis in 1926 when his proposal failed to secure unanimous support. He resigned the Presidency of Sinn Féin in April, and early in May his new organisation, Fianna Fáil, was launched

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix VII.



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at the La Scala Theatre, Dublin, where Mr. de Valera outlined his new policy and forecast with uncanny accuracy what he afterwards carried out in practice from 1932 onwards. Not the least interesting parts of his speech were the passages that went to show that he had nothing to learn as a politician in his attacks on the Cosgrave regime for lavish administration, heavy taxation, and the cost of the armed forces and police. His references to a social policy were vague and general, but the abolition, or at least modification, of the Senate was already foreshadowed.

A new strategy was announced. Briefly, "We should unite the people to smash the oath, and, when the oath was smashed, that Republican representatives should meet the other representatives and deliberate with them in the national interest, accepting no other constitution than the natural right of the people to have the laws under which they live determined freely by their own elected representatives."

The objection to the oath was stated:

"For me it is enough that it is called an 'oath' officially, and that it begins with, 'I do solemnly swear,' and that whenever it suits, it will be held to be an oath by those who impose it, and will be so understood by the world. I say if it is not an oath, why not away with the mockery? Why not end the whole of this abominable prevarication at once? Why retain it as an instrument for our national and moral degradation, and set it as a headline for lying and perjury for the whole country? . . . If it were no more than a simple declaration . . . my opposition to it would not cease. The aspect of the oath I am concerned with is the national, not the religious one. It is a formal admission by the Irish

people through their representatives that a foreign power has the right to rule them."

Such were Mr. de Valera's plans to "get the Nation out of the paralysing Treaty dilemma." Civil War was renounced unequivocally: its "prospective horrors alone are a sufficient initial deterrent to prevent any effective organisation for such an uprising." The familiar argument was developed that to recognise the existence of such facts as the Treaty and Partition was not to "acquiesce in them."

Mr. de Valera also said he believed "that we shall not get in our conditions the stability necessary for strength and the steady pursuit of any national policy, if the Executive exists precariously from day to day on the voting in the Legislature. With proportional representation, the Executive is likely to be altogether too dependent upon combinations of groups and parties.

"I believe the Executive should be elected by the people independently of the Legislature, and for a fixed period. The function of the latter would then be confined to the making of the laws. The function of the Executive is the administration of them. I would have the law and the courts supreme. As it is necessary to pay the members of the Legislature, I would reduce their numbers. In the Free State Lower House, the number is one hundred and fifty-three. One hundred is enough for twenty-six counties.

"Moreover, I do not believe in having a second house, such as the Free State Senate is. Its function as a check on hasty legislation could be more simply and less expensively provided for through the Executive, or through an Advisory Council of a vocational character."

So with a great flourish of trumpets the Militia of

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Destiny—for that is the meaning of *Fianna Fáil*—went ahead with a programme of abolition of the oath, political independence of a united Ireland some day or other, a new Christian social system so far as possible, an Ireland economically self-contained, re-distribution of the land by settling as many families as possible thereon, and constant criticism of Mr. Cosgrave for his tyranny, his Imperialism, his extravagant administration, the positions he gave out as spoils or bribes to Freemasons, traitors and renegades, his Imperial Guard, the police and its Twin, the Free State Army that fired back when people shot at it. In short, all the ear tickling and groundling teasing necessary to move a great democracy. And *Fianna Fáil* went from strength to strength.

But Mr. Cosgrave wasn't worrying, for he was just then giving the Party Football a rousing kick into the de Valera goal, or, in other words, in the name of democracy, for which the Civil War had been fought, he was revising the Constitution, which from the first Public Safety Act onwards was nothing more or less than a Party Football. Mr. de Valera had obtained, or was rapidly obtaining the number of signatures necessary under the Constitution to initiate an Abolition of the Oath Bill. Out went Article 47, and out went Article 48 of the Constitution that conferred the privilege of the Initiative and the Referendum on the people whose Sovereign Will was supreme and unerring. Into the wastepaper basket went another Abolition of the Oath Bill that Mr. Dan Breen introduced, after he had defied the Sovereign Will of Mr. de Valera, entered the Dáil and taken the oath just to show what he thought of it. Indeed, it was widely believed in Ireland that the British Government was far less keen on the oath than Mr. Cos-

grave. And Fianna Fáil grew and looked less sourly on Labour, the Official Opposition. And Labour and Captain Redmond, who had a party of his own, told Mr. Cosgrave that they would rather have formulists and pedants like Mr. de Valera, who was a very estimable gentleman.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Cosgrave, if he was subtracting frills from the Constitution, had with the help of Mr. McGilligan and Kevin O'Higgins, added to the powers and status of the Free State at every Imperial Conference, and pared away formalities, verbiage and frills from the Treaty. But Fianna Fáil refused to be impressed and said it was window-dressing, and until the oath was abolished they would never enter that accursed Dáil. But the I.R.A. and Miss MacSwiney, mutually just civil and strange, agreed that Fianna Fáil were going Cosgrave's bad road, whether they knew it or whether they didn't. And some of the dead cats that had been reserved for those inside the Dáil smote the Militia of Destiny.

At the General Election of June 1927, Fianna Fáil won 44 seats to Cosgrave's 46, but the Farmers, Independents, and others voted with him.

Then the Cosgrave party proceeded to unite Mr. de Valera, the I.R.A., Miss MacSwiney, Labour and send up the fortunes of the Warriors of Destiny. For Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, the most outstanding, courageous and brilliant man in the Cosgrave Government, was murdered by three unknown young men on July 11, 1927, on his way to Mass. Twenty shots were fired at him, he was wounded eight times, three of the wounds were separately sufficient to cause death, and the circumstances were callous and cold-blooded enough to shock Ireland even

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with the memory of the grimmest deeds of the Civil War. To this day the motive behind the crime is unknown, for although Kevin O'Higgins was identified with the Free State repression of the Civil War, he was generally respected by his opponents. Mr. de Valera at once denounced the act in the strongest terms, said it struck at the roots of all representative Government and called on the country to stand up against such outrages. The I.R.A. angrily denied any connection with the shooting. It is quite probable that Kevin O'Higgins, as Minister for Justice, had incurred some private grudge or that the act was that of individual fanatics brooding on the dark days of the Civil War.

Mr. Cosgrave introduced immediately a new Public Safety Act with the most drastic powers of arrest, search and repression. He also introduced another Act aimed at Fianna Fáil, which compelled every candidate at parliamentary elections to take the oath before he could be nominated. The Public Safety Act was rushed through the Senate with the shadow of Fianna Fáil over the Dáil. Even then Mr. de Valera showed how deep-rooted his objection to the oath was, for he held out against the pressure at a private conference of the Fianna Fáil. Eventually he gave way, and it was announced that Fianna Fáil would enter the Dáil under protest. The oath was described as an empty formula. Moreover, they, like all other Free State deputies, merely signed a declaration that they accepted this mild and unhappy formula. The oath was taken under considerable duress, and now its days were numbered. It must be said that Mr. Cosgrave had by his drastic pressure done more to discredit this pet formula of his than he only retained as a barrier against Mr. de Valera. The Labour Party in 1922,

however, showed much more logic and dignity than Fianna Fáil with its last-minute gulp.

Mr. de Valera's subsequent explanations of his action are, however, as bewildering as they are interesting. He could have said that he had taken an oath under duress, that he had always said he would abolish it, and that his action perhaps saved Ireland from a second outbreak of civil strife. There were many opposed to him who defended him on these honourable and intelligible grounds. Sympathy generally was with Fianna Fáil rather than Mr. Cosgrave, who seemed to be exploiting the death of a colleague.

For the Sovereign People rewards its leaders with no gratitude and little understanding, although in Ireland things are a shade better than in most places, since there is always a splendid funeral, all is unsaid, and with generally a monument. Dour outwardly, remorseless in tongue on the platform, Kevin O'Higgins had inspired his colleagues with an affection. Before he died he had spoken his own epitaph in his praise of Michael Collins: "Sleep well from your labours, Michael Collins! Nor let uneasy dream of a life-work wrecked bring shadow to that pale brow. That which you won is saved for your country. Your building stands. The harvest of your reaping is secure." And Mr. Hugh Martin has left on record a conversation he had with Kevin O'Higgins on board a battleship at a naval display during a Dominion Conference in which he took fire, and his usual secretiveness and reserve were laid aside as he said: "Cosgrave has faith!"

But in the crisis of July 1927 popular opinion hardened against Cosgrave and his colleagues, and as noted above there was little disposition to ask Fianna Fáil why it

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could not have entered the Dáil long before, nor to point out that absence from the Dáil weakened much of its criticism of what Mr. Cosgrave had done, left undone or mismanaged from the Ulster Boundary to the financial settlement. But Mr. de Valera's explanations of his and his party's actions are sometimes bewildering. For he takes the trouble to explain the fuss was all about nothing, and that, after all, he had never taken an oath, for there was no oath to take. Speaking in the Dáil on April 29, 1932, just before the Removal of the Oath Bill was finally passed, he said:

"He asked himself what his duty was, and anything that was not wrong he was prepared to do. He was not prepared and would not have felt justified in committing perjury or doing anything equivalent to perjury. The Party opposite had told the people that this was not an oath at all. He believed that the words 'I swear' meant an oath, but Deputies opposite thought differently and said it was a formality. They used the expression long before he did. They said it was a mere formality and had no binding significance, that it demanded nothing, anybody could take it. He asked himself whether in a crisis like that he would be justified in staying outside when in fact this was a mere formality.

"There was only one way to find out. What did he find? Instead of taking this oath openly, where the people could see what was done, as in other Parliaments, they hid it away in a dark room out of sight, so that the public would not know what it was.

"He said at least they were entitled to find out, and they published a signed declaration stating their attitude, and that attitude, said Mr. de Valera, was in fact this: the majority party at the time held that it was not an

oath, and that they (Fianna Fáil) were going to put it to the test. In order that their coming into the Dáil could not be misrepresented, they made that declaration.

“When I came,” continued Mr. de Valera, “to take this so-called oath I presented to the officer in charge that document and told him that that was our attitude, that we were not prepared to take an oath, and I have here a written document in pencil in Irish—the statement I made to the officer who was supposed to administer that oath. I said: ‘I am not prepared to take the oath—I am not going to take it. I am prepared to put my name down here in this book in order to get permission to get into the Dáil, and it has no other significance.’ There was a Testament on the table—and in order that there might be no misunderstanding—I went over, took the Testament and put it away and said, ‘You must remember that I am not taking any oath.’ And that has been done by every member of our Party, and it is said that this is conforming with Article 17. Is it not time to get rid of this nonsense?”

This is Mr. de Valera at his worst, or nearly his worst, for in reply to a question of an astounded deputy as to whether he had not signed a declaration, he added with ingenuous indignation:

“Yes. I signed it in the same way as I signed an autograph for a newspaper. If you ask me whether I had any idea of what was there I say yes, but it was not read to me, nor was I asked to read it. I was told that deputies on the Cumann na nGaedheal benches were so disgusted with the whole performance that they used to walk into the room and say, ‘Sign that for me.’”

This is one of the bewildering patches in Mr. de Valera’s speeches that tempt the irreverent to hope that



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Mr. de Valera winks at himself at least once a year. Yet the speech as a whole is a reasoned and dignified statement of his personal and party position :

“I have taken certain obligations. I did not choose the course of events that have taken place for the last ten years. Methods would be quite different if I had had my way. We find ourselves in a certain position. Since the Treaty was passed I have had only one ambition in life, and that is to defeat British policy in dividing our people here, and I have restrained myself in public many times when I felt impelled to say things that I believed to be true, knew to be true in fact. I restrained myself and I said: ‘Very well, to say such things is only helping to perpetuate the divisions which I did not want to see.’ In order to prevent divisions we had to get some rule by which we can have unity. I knew of no rule but one in the circumstances.”

After the entry of Fianna Fáil on August 12 the whole balance in the Dáil shifted at once. For besides the 22 Labour deputies the eight members of Captain Redmond’s National Party came to a working understanding with Fianna Fáil. It was expected that this coalition would leave the Cosgrave-Farmer-Independent combination in a minority of one. But when Thomas Johnson moved his “No Confidence” motion on August 16, and everyone prepared for Mr. Cosgrave to bow himself out, Mr. McGilligan, his bright young colleague, asked for a recount. It was found that Alderman Jinks, of the National Party, had in what he deemed the interests of Ireland, decided not to vote and vanished. The voting was then 71 to 71, the Speaker gave his casting vote and saved Mr. Cosgrave.

The Dáil at once adjourned until October 11, but on

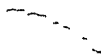
August 25, Mr. Cosgrave dissolved it unexpectedly, a General Election was held. Fianna Fáil, angered by this unexpected move, threw all its force into the election and there was a close race for power. After the General Election, the parties stood: Cosgrave, 61; Fianna Fáil, 57; Labour, 13; Independents, 12; Farmers, 6; National League, 2; Independent Labour, 1. Mr. Cosgrave remained in office, but Fianna Fáil was the second party in Ireland. Labour and de Valera were yet only on speaking terms. But Mr. de Valera had included the earth in his vision as well as the stars, for he now committed himself to the campaign started by Senator Maurice Moore to retain the Land Annuities.



IN March 1932, Eamon de Valera re-entered Dáil Éireann after the General Election at the head of a party that had polled the largest number of votes, 72 strong, with the conditional support of 7 Labour deputies against Mr. Cosgrave's 57 and 17 Independents. So on March 9, Mr. de Valera was elected President of the Executive Council and appointed his Ministry.

Mr. Cosgrave had expected the defeat. Perhaps he felt like comparing himself to Brian Boru, who had fallen but saved his kingdom. For the General Election had been fought on the Oath of Allegiance, the retention of the Land Annuities, the release of the Republican prisoners held under Mr. Cosgrave's own last resounding kick to the Irish Constitution: the Public Safety Act of October 1931. The Labour Party held the balance of power and were telling the world that they controlled Mr. de Valera. Moreover, Mr. de Valera had asked only for a limited mandate: he pledged himself not to go beyond this mandate without a direct appeal to the country. And several publicists and many leader writers in the great British Press told Mr. Cosgrave he had only to wait, Mr. de Valera was only a temporary interruption, he was a nerveless, romantic, grandiloquent half-Irish "Kerensky," who would soon be shattered by the harsh realities of the world.

The Fianna Fáil Government was nominated with



record speed, and the jails were emptied of Republican prisoners within forty-eight hours. Mr. de Valera then proceeded to show that, if he had a limited mandate, he had also a limited use for the niceties of diplomatic courtesy so far as the British Government was concerned.

In a broadcast on St. Patrick's Day he expressed his belief that the people of Great Britain desired friendly relations with the Free State; in an interview published in the United States he announced that he was going to carry through his election pledge to abolish the oath of allegiance. Within a week, Mr. J. H. Thomas, British Dominion Secretary, told the horrified House of Commons that the High Commissioner for the Irish Free State, Mr. J. W. Dulanty, had handed him "a very important and serious document." Before the contents of this document had sunk into the minds of the august assemblage, and Mr. Thomas's somewhat melodramatic speech had come to an end, already the headline and gramophone Press was out with its shriek of "Grave Irish Crisis," and one little Cockney paper-seller refused to be impressed as he sold his bundles out with the jibe: "Old Ireland's orf agen! She'll send you up in the obfuscated air this time. Nearly did it before to some of you!"

It appeared that Mr. Dulanty, on behalf of Irish Free State Government, had handed in a document announcing "that the oath was not mandatory in the Treaty" and must be removed "as we have an absolute right to modify our Constitution as the people desire." The people, and not merely those who supported the de Valera Government, it was claimed, regarded "a test of this character" as "an intolerable burden, a relic of medievalism, a test imposed from without under

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threat of immediate and terrible war." The statement ended:

"But there can be no normal relations between us so long as one side insists on imposing on the other a conscience test which has no parallel in treaty relationships between States. And even if the British Government held the view that the oath is mandatory in the Treaty, they must recognise that such a test and imposition on the conscience of the people is completely out of place in a political agreement between two countries."

This was peremptory enough, but in the correspondence that Mr. Thomas quoted in reply to his letter he had written to Mr. de Valera, Minister of External Affairs, a more serious issue was raised by Mr. Thomas: Mr. de Valera's public statement of his intention to keep his second election pledge: to retain the Land Annuities. And then another epistolary wrestle started in which, for the moment, Mr. Thomas took Mr. Lloyd George's place. Mr. de Valera was severely criticised for his first handling of the oath question by the otherwise not unfriendly Professor Berriedale Keith on the grounds that he quite needlessly prejudiced his case in other matters, "for the Free State legislature, by addresses to the British Parliament, would have been entitled to have the Constitution altered as desired, under the operation of the rule laid down in the Treaty that Canadian constitutional practice applies to the Irish Constitution."

But by the end of June constitutional experts and lawyers were still talking, the Oath Abolition Bill had been rushed through the Dáil and Senate, and the Economic War was about to start on the second issue raised informally by Mr. de Valera and with due formality by Mr. Thomas. The Labour Party was talking

no more about balance of power, for Mr. de Valera's social policy was too like their own; in the Land Annuities dispute they agreed with him, while they had only taken the oath under protest, and stated when they took it that "if at any time it shall be deemed wise or expedient by the people of Ireland, in the exercise of their sovereign right . . . to denounce the Treaty . . . or amend the Constitution, nothing in our declaration of allegiance shall be a barrier to our freedom of action."

What was the Land Annuities dispute? Like its twin, the oath dispute: both very simple and very technical. In both cases lawyers and constitutional experts are still arguing, and Mr. Cosgrave and Mr. de Valera's daily organ, the *Irish Press*, are still battering each other with statistics, quotations and document this and document that. Five eminent Irish lawyers backed Mr. Cosgrave. Seven eminent Irish lawyers backed Mr. de Valera's contention that Ireland was not legally liable, and the twelve of them played hide-and-seek through all the clauses of the hastily drafted Irish Treaty, and in and out of Mr. Lloyd George's 1920 Government of Ireland Act, and all the archives of the Irish Free State.

The Land Annuities had been paid without question by the Cosgrave Government from 1923. Between 1870 and 1909 some 18 Land Acts had been passed by the British Government to give the Irish farmers ownership of the land on which they had been for generations merely tenants. For generations, in the Irish view, this land had been plundered from the Irish people by massacre, rapine, famine and persecution. Eventually, to the British mind, British statesmen ransomed the sins of their ancestors with a generosity unexampled in history. The landlords were bought out from 1891 with

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land stock, public securities issued by the British Government, and the British Government was legally liable to the holders of the stock. Before the Irish Free State was established, the Land Commission collected them, as one of the departments of the British administration. Under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act the Land Annuities were assigned to both Governments, North and South. Under different agreements between the Cosgrave and British Governments it was agreed that the Free State should pay over the money to the British Treasury. The Free State Government did so. The de Valera contention has been that these agreements were secret and not formally ratified by the Dáil. Mr. Cosgrave and his party deny this, and retort that it was a pity Mr. de Valera wasn't there when they mentioned it in the Dáil.

The Annuities retention campaign was first started by Colonel Maurice Moore, taken up with enthusiasm by the Left Wing of the Republicans, notably by Mr. Peadar O'Donnell. Mr. de Valera adopted it and transmuted it by retaining the Annuities in the Free State treasury, halving the payments, and clapping any farmer into jail who wouldn't pay up. He casually mentioned, for he was at no pains to win over British opinion, that until the dispute could be referred to arbitration the money retained would be banked in a reserve fund.

Poor Mr. Thomas by now was tied up in a tangle of argument. He and Lord Hailsham paid a visit to Dublin without result. He began to tell Mr. de Valera that he was breaking international treaties and flouting imperial conventions. So towards June there was a full-dress debate in the House of Commons just before the first duties were clapped on Irish cattle, and Mr. Thomas

stated his case and Mr. de Valera's very politely, and then came from the quiet little hills of Wales on that memorable Friday, June 17, 1932, Mr. Lloyd George, and this is what he said: it is long but vivid, and speaks for itself:

"As he had the honour of being a member of the British delegation that negotiated the Irish Treaty he would like to say something about the present situation. . . . He had watched the proceedings which had occurred recently with very great interest and had had an opportunity of perusing the various documents, and he had not the slightest doubt that in substance there was a breach of faith. . . .

"He was a little startled when he first heard that two leading Cabinet Ministers were going to Dublin to negotiate. . . . It had made it clear that no one in this country was anxious to have a quarrel with our neighbour and that no false pride would be allowed to intervene in the establishment of a good understanding. It had also made it clear to the Irish people that if we insisted upon the Treaty it was not in any spirit of arrogance and stubbornness. . . .

"... He had had some experience of Mr. de Valera as a negotiator and, frankly, he had never seen anything quite like him. (Laughter.) Mr. de Valera was perfectly unique, and the poor distracted world had a good right to be profoundly thankful that he was unique. (Laughter.)"

Then Mr. Lloyd George, with all thoughts of revising that Treaty of Versailles "by agreement of course," far, far away held the House spell-bound:

"What is Mr. de Valera's demand in substance? Anyone who wants to know what he is driving at ought



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to read first of all the correspondence that took place between the Government of which I was the head and Mr. de Valera before we had our first conference. He made it clear what his attitude was, and if you look at the correspondence between the Dominions Secretary and Mr. de Valera, there is really no change in his attitude.

“His demand was, not that Ireland should be a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations with such rights as each Dominion has, whether by the Statute of Westminster or by any other statute, but that Ireland should be a Sovereign State and should have the same relation to Britain and the Empire as Belgium and Holland have to Germany and Portugal to Spain. He has not changed one iota of that position, and let us not treat that as if it were merely a trumpery question of the oath. (Cheers.)

“If Mr. de Valera came forward and said, ‘I don’t like this oath; it offends some religious scruple,’ we would have had no right to go beyond a statement of that kind, if he had made it. If he had said, ‘I don’t like the way in which it is phrased, because the form of it is probably humiliating, but I am all for Ireland being a member of the Commonwealth of free nations which is known as the British Empire, on the same terms as any other free nation,’ we could then have said to him, ‘Very well, that is a basis for negotiation, if there is any other form in which you would prefer that that allegiance and loyalty to the Empire should be expressed.’ I cannot understand anybody in the Government prosecuting a quarrel with a nation merely upon that.

“That is not what he is after. As he himself has put it definitely in writing, his demand is that the relation of Ireland to the British Empire should be the relation of

Belgium and Holland to Germany and Portugal to Spain<sup>1</sup>; Belgium that waged war, Belgium that, after the war, annexed a part of German territory on the ground that it really belonged to Belgium! These are the relations that he thinks we ought to have between the British Empire and Ireland. We cannot accept that (cheers). We refuse to negotiate with him on that basis. Let us consider the man we are dealing with. He is claiming that Ireland should be a sovereign independent State, associating with the British Empire, but equally associating with any other Empire for any particular purpose. . . . He has no objection to associating with Canada or Australia or even with us, but as a sovereign independent State. Let anyone who doubts that look at the correspondence which has taken place, and which took place first of all between Mr. de Valera and myself.

"We introduced into the Treaty conditions which would make it impossible for anybody to raise a great army in Ireland, not because we were afraid of it but because it would involve our raising armies here and we did not want that. We said that the ports of Ireland must be open to us for the purposes of defence. We had had the experiences of the war, which were only

<sup>1</sup> "If a small nation's right to independence is forfeit when a more powerful neighbour covets its territory for the military or other advantages it is supposed to confer, there is an end to liberty. No longer can any small nation claim a right to a separate sovereign existence. Holland and Denmark can be made subservient to Germany, Belgium to Germany, Portugal to Spain. . . . In Ireland's case, to speak of her seceding from a partnership she has not accepted, or from an allegiance she has not undertaken to render, is fundamentally false, just as the claim to subordinate her independence to British strategy is fundamentally unjust." De Valera to Lloyd George, August 24, 1921.

"When you argue that the relations of Ireland with the British Empire are comparable in principle to those of Holland or Belgium with the German Empire, I find it necessary to repeat once more that those are premises which no British Government, whatever its complexion, can ever accept." Lloyd George to de Valera, August 26, 1921.

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just behind us. We had had one of the blackest tragedies of the war because the coast of Ireland, north, south, east and west, was the deadliest trap for our poor ships. Unless we had command of the coast of Ireland; if the coast of Ireland had been in the hands of an independent sovereign State which might have been friendly or might have been hostile, we might have been done for in the struggle, and we were not going to take that risk. (Cheers.)

“But observe, Mr. de Valera in his letter to the Dominions Secretary includes those two conditions of the Treaty as conditions that he deprecates and if he has the right to abolish the oath, if by any Act of his Parliament he can change this condition and another, he can change those two conditions. He can only have an army now of, I think, about 15,000—just enough to keep order; but he can, so I am told, if he likes to get rid of that and have a conscript army. He can have an Act of Parliament to say that, whether we are at war or not, and whatever the peril may be to the 40,000,000 people who live in this country—if we were in peril of being starved to death in a great struggle—Mr. de Valera could pass an Act of Parliament to say, ‘We will close our ports against you; nay, we can place them at the disposal of any other country if we wish to do so.’ (Hear, hear.)

“I am glad the Government have put their foot down. (Loud and prolonged cheers.) Do not let us be under any delusion that this is merely a trumpety and trivial discussion as to a form of an oath or as to your method of declaring allegiance to the British Empire. It is a clear demand from which Mr. de Valera has never swerved for one day. (Cheers.) He is that type; he will never change right to the end; he has always turned

back to the past like a pillar of salt—(laughter)—and you cannot make him do otherwise. . . .

“I know it is said that it is better that you should have the good will of Ireland. What more could we have done? I am all for having the good will of Ireland. (Hear, hear.) That is why we signed that Treaty. (Cheers.) We realised that it was a danger to this country to have a gallant people like the Irish people there with a legitimate grievance at a time when we were engaged in a great world struggle. That is what was brought home to us, and that is why we signed that Treaty. We removed the grievance. (Cheers.) We accorded to Ireland all the liberties demanded for it by every great leader the Irish race has had. (Cheers.) The Irish Treaty accorded to Ireland far greater liberties than any of the Acts that were supported.”

In reply to an interruption from Mr. Devlin about partition, Mr. Lloyd George proceeded: “I will put it in this way, that as far as three-fourths of Ireland is concerned, we have made concessions of a much more liberal character than any that were claimed by Grattan, O’Connell, or Parnell. (Cheers.) With regard to the other fourth, we did what the majority of the population of that corner of Ireland asked for—that is to say, we gave liberty to them. (Cheers.) I am all for a united Ireland, but this is not the road to reach it. On the contrary, if this policy prevails, I do not believe that there is the slightest hope of getting anything like unity in Ireland. (Cheers.)

“What happened throughout the world? That was acclaimed as a fair settlement. I am told, and I see that Mr. de Valera constantly uses the phrase, that we signed the Treaty under the threat of a terrible war. Well, the

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United States approved of it. That was not under a threat of war. When the whole of the Dominions of the Crown approved of it they were not threatened with a terrible war. France, which was in favour of all the claims of Ireland, approved of this settlement. That was not because they were threatened. (Cheers.)

"We have done everything we could to win the goodwill of Ireland (cheers)—and what have we done since the Treaty? Can Mr. de Valera point out one particular in which we have infringed the Treaty? (Cheers.) Can he point out any particular in respect of which we have interfered with Ireland?

"They have carried their own legislation for their own domestic concerns; they have passed a tariff against us; and there never was the slightest protest. What is the good of going back hundreds of years? (Laughter and cheers.) Why, the very ground on which I am standing was at one time the exclusive possession of my own race—(laughter)—and, had it not been for the cruel tyranny of the Saxons, all the speeches here would have been delivered in Welsh. (Renewed laughter.) It is no use going back, and certainly not in these times when things are changing so rapidly. Why, no one here would care to remind the right honourable gentlemen opposite of what some of them thought of their own comrades about twelve months ago. (Laughter.) Things have changed. What is the use of going back on these things?" (*Times*, June 18, 1932.)

It was brilliant, but Mr. de Valera didn't budge one inch. He did just what Mr. Lloyd George and His Majesty's Government were doing: went on saying and doing just what he had always said and done.

So in July the Irish Free State (Special Duties) Act

imposed special duties on Irish imports, and Mr. Cosgrave said the Land Annuities were going over to Great Britain on the horns of their cattle. That was small consolation to the miners of South Wales, for the horns of the Irish cattle also tossed many millions of British trade with the Irish Free State right over the moon. And the Economic War went on until, some years later, both sides decided to blunder out with Pacts as they had blundered in with arguments about another Pact.

In January 1933 Mr. de Valera suddenly dissolved the Dáil. He won his majority, for the figures now were: Fianna Fáil, 77; Cosgrave, 48; Centre Party, 11; Independent, 9; Labour, 8. From that moment onwards his success was undoubted. The Opposition split and Mr. de Valera locked up all its Blue-Shirted would-be Mussolinis. With his would-be Left Wing Lenins he adopted at first a more Fabian policy. He refrained from active raids for arms and tolerated drilling and the fullest propaganda against himself and his party, although the Republican organ, *An Poblacht*, was an exception to this, for it was frequently suppressed. It was not until June 1936 that the Irish Republican Army was finally proclaimed an illegal body and the first big round-up of its leaders took place. In his approach to British opinion, Mr. de Valera showed more disposition to argue his case. And his victory, on the other hand, led to a slow change in English opinion concerning Mr. de Valera.

But for another reason, Mr. de Valera's credit now stands higher than ever before. He had acquitted himself with dignity on a world stage, and it is here we shall prepare to leave him, for at Geneva Eamon de Valera revealed himself as the man we have endeavoured to portray with fidelity and without prejudice throughout

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these pages in a career that has had few equals. But before the scene shifts to Geneva and towards an end, one last declaration of Mr. de Valera must be quoted:

“It was not they who had tried to involve political questions in the matter; it was the British. It was an attempt by economic pressure to force them to abandon the position they had taken up as the rightful position of the Irish people. The British Government wanted to link up the financial questions with the political questions, but, if they wanted a settlement of the political questions, then, they would have to be very much more courageous than they had been up to the present.”

In a speech at Ennis on February 5, 1933, Mr. de Valera made his famous definition of his policy for a self-sufficing Ireland:

“The definite direction in which they were going to move was consciously towards the achievement of an Ireland completely free and as self-sufficing economically as was reasonably possible. They had said good-bye for ever to the day in which this country was a grazing ranch for feeding other people, a dumping-ground for the manufactures of other people, and a country in which our people were brought up for export like cattle.

“Personally, he spent little time thinking of the past or of the victory achieved. What concerned him most was trying to plan how the work before them might be accomplished, and how work could be provided for the unemployed. To get work for our people was the most urgent matter for the Government. The greatest benefactor now was the man who provided an opportunity for work.” (*Irish Independent*, February 6, 1933.)

In a broadcast to the United States on St. Patrick's Day, 1936, Mr. de Valera claimed:

“The area of land under tillage crops was 94,000 acres greater than in the preceding year. Wheat alone increased by 69,000 acres, and the acreage of this crop was eight times as great as in 1931, the year before the present scheme for the promotion of wheat-growing was adopted.

“The production and exports of dairy products and bacon were also substantially higher than in 1934, and, in consequence of a special arrangement made with the British Government, there was a marked recovery in exports of cattle.

“The total value of Saorstát exports for the year increased by about two million pounds, and the total value of imports fell by over £1,790,000, as compared with 1934. There was consequently an improvement of more than £3,750,000 in the balance of trade.

“Between the 1st April 1932 and 31st December 1935, 33,919 houses were built with the financial assistance of the State. This gives an average of 8,000 houses a year as compared with about 2,500 during the previous ten years. The rate of building is besides accelerating, and last year the number of houses erected was 14,081. We can now safely claim that the problem is well on the way to solution.

“Confidence in the financial position of the State was demonstrated by the remarkable success of the scheme for the conversion of the First National Loan.

“Taking the position as a whole, we are rapidly moving towards the attainment of the reasonable degree of independence of external trade which is regarded by the Government as necessary for the economic security of the Saorstát.” (Abridged from *Irish Press*, March 18, 1936.)





IT is impossible not to realise at the very first meeting with de Valera that he is a man of sincerity and personality. He is reserved but gracious, self-confident but never arrogant, emphatic and insistent when he speaks, but a good listener. He is a stickler for competence, but those who have worked under him have always liked him. He weighs his words if he prepares a statement with a slowness novel in an age of speed and slogans. For years he was the wonder and exasperation of all journalists who met him. They esteemed him personally and spoke well of him, but the guard on the sanctuary amused and irritated them by turn. Communication was only possible through worshipful and eloquent acolytes who cultivated the art of saying nothing at length and handed out typewritten answers to questions borne reverently to the President. The typewritten answers were annotated with much casuistry, in the strict sense of the words, for de Valera, at least, taught the questioners that all effects have causes. The answers were returned by the bluff Harry Boland, the more subtle Frank Gallagher or the rapt Mr. Childers or Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald with a quip and wreathed smile, and indeed by a whole army of echo-bearers.

And most properly so. This was a most effective dyke against the stunt Press and British propaganda, but they overdid it so much that the dyke became a rampart

which imprisoned de Valera and all his lieutenants. It did no harm to the stunt Press, which just let its imagination run riot outside the paper fortifications, while the British propagandists after the first thousand encyclicals or so went its own sweet way and romanced like billy-o.

"These people are too honest!" said a well-known London journalist during the Treaty negotiations. Mr. Childers had just refused to give in confidence to a sympathetic newspaper some comparatively harmless information about the negotiations, as he thought it would be a breach of the pledge of secrecy. So on the paper wall the British propagandists wrote what they wanted the world to read. It was the custom for years, and it remained the custom in a crisis when the pledge of secrecy had become a farce. So Ireland was fed on phrases and the British public and the world at large on the British case.

Around their beloved President these paper festoons were woven for years. His statements said nothing at length and his speeches were much the same. To be sure there was a method in this reticence, but its least welcome result was the false impression it gave of the charm and courage of de Valera in private. There were times when he threw off his reserve and said something and gave his script-carriers a holiday. The skies did not fall, although by sheer force of habit the typescript brigade commented on these unfettered discretions with ingenuity for hours and hours with a preliminary warning that the nation's business hardly allowed them a moment. The simplest fact about the President might involve a national issue. The most innocent comment by some hurried and honest publicist a hundred miles

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away on some obscure point hours more of agonised logomachy.

But de Valera survived even that siege of the Press behind his paper wall. Those who penetrated it disregarded the wordy mists and noted the charm and simplicity of the besieged. There was but the merest hint of the schoolmaster. The deeply lined face and the fine dark brown eyes, clear and thoughtful, the regular features, the grace of the tall and well-knit figure, the pugnacious and aggressive nostrils, the grace of manner blended with both power and reserve could never be forgotten. He was no host for any politician in a hurry.

Personal impressions of him are rarely unfavourable, for there is no arrogance, affectation or pretentiousness about him. His manner is simple and easy. You can well believe that his political and revolutionary career has been ruled by principle tempered for all his asceticism and rigidity by a profound humanity. He will sacrifice himself readily, but he hesitates to sacrifice others. He will pass sleepless nights rather than injustice should be done to the most obscure individual in the community. He would lose an election rather than use the meaner tactics common to many Irish politicians, and woe to any propagandist of his who tries them. He will consider joining a Terence MacSwiney in his last protest, but call off a mass hunger-strike rather than the conscience of some humble hunger-striker should be troubled. He will march into an insurrection and snap his fingers at the firing-squad, but he will protest with authority against an ambush that might sacrifice innocent lives.

The trappings and ornaments of place and power irk him, but nothing impairs his dignity of word and gesture. It is true that he has made nothing and gained nothing

from his leadership except heartbreak, triumph, friends and enemies. During his long struggle for Irish independence with all its disillusionments and exultations, he and his family have shared in all the privations well-known to the pioneers of Irish-Ireland and Sinn Féin. He is of the temper of Griffith, who mortgaged the house over his head to run his obscure newspapers and refused to exchange penury for well-paid posts on the American Press. But to say this of de Valera—and you will wait long before a hint of it escapes him, except perhaps a hint of polite impatience that anyone should act otherwise—is to say little.

He has another quality—and again from him you will never learn it—the quality of stoicism. There is a picture of de Valera, haggard, drawn and dignified, a sorrowful figure with clenched hands standing at the grave of his son, Brian, which tells of this deep quality of the man. It would be seen in series of portraits of him as his career unfolds, from the fierce-eyed youthful militant de Valera of the pre-war years to the de Valera of to-day. Even his iron constitution has shown signs of wear under the responsibilities of the trying years of his leadership, and again his closest friends declare he has repelled his shaken health in every crisis from 1922 to 1932 with a Socratic humour. When his eyesight was so tried by overwork that he was threatened with total blindness, he listened calmly to the anxious specialists and went on with his tasks without a comment.

In March 1936, Professor Alfred Vogt, the famous Zurich specialist, performed a successful operation on Mr. de Valera's left eye for high-grade myopia and a severe cataract. Mr. de Valera resumed his active official duties, after a seven weeks' rest, but had to wear

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dark glasses, and be very careful with his restored sight.

He is an indefatigable reader, and those who know him best say simply: "he reads everything." His knowledge of foreign affairs is wide and deep, and for his long martyrdom of speech-making he consoles himself with chess, the radio and the abstractions of higher mathematics.



AS a statesman, de Valera has a much higher reputation in Geneva than in Dublin or London, and this is significant. He is seen by fresh and impartial eyes to be a man of vision and principle. Neither Irish venom nor British spleen can obscure his greatness there. It is obvious that his word once given is never broken, and that when once a principle is at stake he is implacable, so that he receives his final justification since a link binds Dublin 1916, London 1921 and Geneva 1935. We have seen that de Valera is, on a broad view, merely working out the Irish-Ireland ideals, political, cultural and economic, that inspire the whole movement vaguely, incorrectly but conveniently called Sinn Fein. And it was at Geneva in 1935 that this first became so clear that henceforth it could never be doubted. De Valera again revealed himself as the consistent idealist and man of principle. He renounced the temptation to exploit the Italo-Abyssinian crisis by doing nothing except making a glib and harmless comparison between League sanctions and the British sanctions long before aimed at the economic life of the Irish Free State. He insisted that the Irish people had freely given their word and must perforce stand by all their League obligations.

The Dublin politicians kittenishly chased their provincial tails, but the Dublin wits were overjoyed and expressed the Liffeside mirth in a witty cartoon in

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*Dublin Opinion:* John Bull in full regalia stood on the Geneva platform, and over his head and over the head of his bulldog beside him haloes hovered. At the Council table below Mr. de Valera was smiling in approval as he expressed his admiring surprise: "Ah, Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

When de Valera as President of the League Council was offered the usual prepared official string of platitudes and pious hopes he declined the draft, re-wrote it himself, and on September 26, 1932, opened the Thirteenth Session with a candid and courageous speech that the delegates received in stony silence, without a single cheer but with a secret admiration afterwards freely expressed. He shocked the League by a calm, polite and cruel analysis of its defects and failures; to-day some of the passages have a prophetic ring.

"Speaking of my country," he said, "I am confident if we are left free to pursue our own policy, we shall succeed not only in securing proper adjustment of our social and economic life, but shall be able to contribute more than our share to human progress throughout the world. I want you to believe that we in Ireland desire peace—peace at home and throughout the world. In spite of opinions you may have formed from misleading reports, I want you to know that our history is the history of a people who have consistently sought merely to be allowed to lead their own lives in their own way, at peace with their neighbours and with the world."

His opening words were spoken with a certain hesitation that vanished as he went on, and the great hall, filled with the representatives of the world's nations, West, East, Latin and Teuton, Australian, Canadian,

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South American, grew alert and tense. With Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary-General, almost at his elbow, the British delegation facing him, a Chinese delegate behind him and the impassive microphone ready to carry his words to a wider audience on the air, Mr. de Valera rose unapplauded and spoke very quietly some words of truth, and spoke them too bluntly for the over-complacent in that Assembly. He dealt first with the Disarmament Conference and said quietly that he did not think he would be accused of exaggeration if he said that the measure of progress so far realised had not fulfilled the expectations of the peoples of the world. Having alluded to the conflict in the Far East and the humanitarian work of the League for the relief of distress in China and a hope for the just and final settlement of the dispute between China and Japan when the Lytton Report came before them, he said the Report of the Secretary-General was a record of no mean achievement. It would, however, be a great mistake for them to think that the League could live on the expressions of satisfaction which it received from its friends or from that Assembly.

“Out beyond these walls,” he continued, “there is the public opinion of the world, and if the League is to prosper, or even survive, it must obtain the support and confidence of that public opinion. It has been said that, in the final analysis, the League has no sanctions but the force of world opinion.

“At the moment that is profoundly true, and it seems to me, therefore, that in the best interests of the League a wider review of its work should be undertaken on occasions such as this, not so much in the light of the knowledge of the difficulties experienced as in the light



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of the fear, the criticisms and the prejudices, if you like, of public opinion in our respective countries."

The people felt that the testing time had come, and they were watching to see if that test would reveal weakness presaging ultimate dissolution or a strength that would be an assurance of renewed vigour and growth. The eyes of all people were focussed on the League to-day as perhaps never before.

Let them be frank with themselves. There were complaints, criticisms and suspicions. People were complaining that the League was devoting its activities to matters of secondary or minor importance, while the vital international problems of the day—problems affecting the existence of the people—were being shelved, postponed or ignored. People were saying that the small States, while being given a voice, had little influence in the final determination of League action, and that they had not the influence they were entitled to have and should have under the Covenant.

People were becoming impatient and starting even to inquire if the apparently meagre results of the League justified the contributions to the League and the expense of sending delegation after delegation to Geneva which was imposed on the already overburdened national taxpayer.

Finally, there was a suspicion abroad that little more than lip service was being paid to the fundamental principles on which the League was founded. There was a suspicion that the action of the League in the economic sphere could be paralysed by the pressure of powerful national interests, and that if the hand raised against the Covenant were sufficiently strong, with impunity. The League was a defendant at the bar of

public opinion and the onus of justification upon it was almost overwhelming. A good deal of the criticism which he had described was, without doubt, unjustified. A good deal of it was uninformed.

"But what have we done to give it a really effective answer?" asked Mr. de Valera. As mostly always, he maintained a calm and level tone throughout his speech and hardly made one gesture. "The vast collection of surveys and reports and confidential records accumulated in our archives is not evidence that will disprove the charges brought against the League.

"The one effective way of silencing the criticism and of bringing to the support of the League millions who at present stand aside in apathy or look upon its activities with undisguised cynicism is to say unmistakably that the Covenant of the League is a solemn pact, the obligations of which no State, great or small, will find it possible to ignore."

No State was powerful enough to stand for long against the League if the Governments and their people were determined that the Covenant should be upheld.

The League would be judged by the success or failure of the Disarmament Conference. Without progressive disarmament it is almost impossible for the League to survive. The success of the Disarmament Conference was of vital importance, and he hoped that public opinion in favour of disarmament would be increasingly felt in every State.

"On every side," runs another striking passage in this speech, "there is evidence of impending economic collapse. Twenty-five million unemployed are crying out for the recognition of the rights of themselves and

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their families to work and live. One hundred million people are faced with starvation, in the midst of a world of plenty, in a world in which mechanical development has reached a stage of production capable of reaching many times the people's needs.

"It is our duty to face this anomalous and desperate position frankly and honestly, not as the representatives of States or Parties, or special interests, but as men who recognise that the primary duty of statesmen, national and international, is to plan for the well-being of their fellows, the plain ordinary human being of every country.

"There is no doubt that when the will exists a solution for this problem will be found. But it must be a will to action that will go deeper than the examination of the possibilities of re-opening the channels of international trade. It is our duty to suggest that in this and other fields the time has come for action. The whole basis of production, distribution and credit must be completely overhauled. If we shirk this task and fail to make the changes obviously necessary, and to re-organise our economic life deliberately and purposely, and if we fail to provide for the fundamental needs of our people, we will be failing in our duty and failing disastrously. International co-operation is needed."

After the reference to Ireland's will to peace already quoted, Mr. de Valera concluded:

"If we are left free, our way will be a way of peace, thinking in terms not of self-interest nor of the acquisition of territory nor of petty power, but of human beings living as they have a right to live in the best our State can give them while contributing to the world the best

that is in us. I feel that other States could face the task in a similar spirit and with equal hope.

“ Because of that conviction and of the mutual help I know we can all render to each other, I consider it a great privilege for my country to occupy at this time the position of importance it holds on the Council of the League. Go dTugaidh Dia cabhair duinn ins an obair mhóir atá romhainn agus nár leighid Se go dteipidh orainn. (May God assist us in the exalted task before us, and may He not permit that we should fail.) ”

Even those most hostile to de Valera admitted the courage as well as the importance of this speech. “ For once at least,” wrote the *Irish Times*, “ the world will be inclined to applaud Mr. de Valera.” “ What does matter,” said the *Manchester Guardian*, “ and matters enormously, is that someone in authority—if only a temporary authority—at Geneva should pass on these criticisms, speaking with no cotton wool in his mouth.” The *Daily Telegraph* pulled itself together, raised its eyebrows and confessed : “ It is a strange piece of irony which introduces Mr. de Valera in the character of a critic of the inadequate vigour of the League of Nations. Of all men in the public life of the world, he has been the foremost advocate of self-contained isolated nationalism. That the leader who has ever declared ‘ ourselves alone ’ the sole sufficient principle of politics should lecture the League on its incomplete success in welding the nations into one international power was certainly unexpected.” The *Daily Herald* special correspondent said : “ Mr. de Valera this morning made the best speech I have ever heard from a President of the League Assembly. That is not only my own judgment. It is the opinion of almost every League journalist with whom I have spoken.

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And yet from beginning to end there was not a word, not a handclap of applause from the assembled delegates. It was the speech which many of us have been waiting to hear from some authoritative place."

The silence of the delegates, stunned by this plain speaking, is emphasised in other reports of the scene, their refraining from the formal handclaps as the President concluded his speech, but these reports also emphasise the many expressions of approval after the sitting of de Valera's courage and sincerity and the true international spirit behind his words, expressions of admiration and almost envy. But from that moment, whatever his British and Irish critics might broadcast to the world against him fell upon less friendly ears. His reputation rose, and it was felt that Ireland had sent more than a romantic and baffling figure-head to Geneva.

Eamon de Valera was honoured in Geneva as an excellent President of the League Council. He has stirred Geneva twice since: in his famous appeal in 1934 to Soviet Russia to tolerate Christianity, and his speech on Abyssinia in September 1935.

To-day, unchallenged, this man is the Dictator of the Irish Free State, but a Unique Dictator. He has always promised that when he has no longer a majority he will step down, and he has always kept his promises. Since he came to power the evil passions of the Civil War have dimmed and faded somewhat. Of his attempt to build up a self-dependent Ireland, of his industrial and social policies it is too early to speak. He continues his argument, that argument we have followed through so many phases and so many scenes.

And before we leave the fair city of Geneva let us do what Eamon de Valera's exasperated critics always accuse

him of doing, let us go away back to the fifth century, further even than Eamon de Valera has ever gone in his historical arguments to show that effects have causes. And here we shall meet another foreigner who ruled Ireland, and indeed still rules Ireland, more Irish than the Irish themselves. This man is not even as Irish as Eamon de Valera. He is Saint Patrick, and for forty days and forty nights he has fasted on the top of Croagh Patrick in County Mayo, some thousands of feet above the Atlantic. Desolate and obdurate he fasts, and to all the fair promises that an angel from Heaven would make him, he answers only: "Is there aught else that will be granted me?" He raises more awkward questions than ever Eamon de Valera raised, for he makes three requests:

"That the Saxons should not abide by consent or otherwise in Ireland so long as he himself abided in Heaven; that the Christian faith should never be extinguished in Ireland; above all, that on the day when the twelve thrones should be set out on Mount Sion in the presence of Heaven and Earth and Hell, he alone should be judge over the men and women of Ireland."

"Certainly," retorted the Angel as he granted the first two requests, "that last you shall never get from the Lord!"

But Saint Patrick told the Angel that he would, or else he would not depart from that Rick until the crack of doom, and what was more he would leave a guardian behind him. So in the end the Angel flew away again and returned with the message:

"What thou hast prayed for thou shalt have, but the Lord saith there has not come, and there will not come after the Apostles, a man more admirable, were it not for thy hardness."

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And it was this very Angel who announced to Saint Patrick thirty years before his birth the coming of Saint David, most estimable patron of all the little hills and homes of Wild Wales. At least, so it is written on a tablet in a great hall in the House of Commons.

## APPENDICES





## APPENDIX I

### DE VALERA ON EASTER WEEK

It is one of the merits of Mr. de Valera that he has never worn his Easter halo, earned grimly enough; in no speech of his has the slightest hint escaped that he was one of the outstanding military leaders of Easter Week: the last place to seek information of his personal part in that is in his speeches. And he has made many speeches in commemoration of the event. On Monday, April 24, 1933, speaking at the graves of the executed 1916 leaders in Arbour Hill Barracks, Mr. de Valera, however, revealed what Easter Week meant to him, and although again not one personal fact escapes, the speech is significant and worthy of record:

“Here by the graves of the leaders of Easter Week, we are gathered in commemoration. We have come to honour their memory and the memory of their comrades and loved ones; to renew our pledges of fidelity to the cause for which they died; and to recall once more the example of heroic courage and unselfish devotion which they gave.

“No words can fittingly commemorate the sacrifice of these men, except perhaps the words of a new proclamation restoring the Republic they proclaimed and gave their lives to defend. But the time has not come for that, and we must content ourselves to-day with the declaration that it is for that goal we strive, and that we shall not rest until we have reached it. So I ask you all, as we stand on this hallowed ground, to resolve in your hearts to do your parts to complete the task of the men of Easter Week.

“It is a resolve not to be lightly undertaken, and it may not be easily or soon accomplished. But it is the only resolve worthy of a race that has never admitted conquest; and, however difficult it may be in fulfilment, it is only through it Ireland can now attain happiness and peace. Let us then in God’s name pledge ourselves to this high purpose; and, while we are working to achieve it, let it be made clear

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that we yield no willing assent to any form or symbol that is out of keeping with Ireland's right as a sovereign nation.

"Let us remove those forms one by one so that this State that we control may be a Republic in fact; and that, when the time comes, the proclaiming of *the* Republic may involve no more than a ceremony, the formal confirmation of a status already attained.

"In devoting ourselves to this task, we must bear in mind that to the leaders of Easter Week the Republic meant more than a form of Government, that it meant more even than an independent Ireland.

"They were not men who used words lightly; and when in their proclamation they guaranteed 'equal rights and equal opportunities' to all citizens, they meant it. They meant that the handicaps which made it all but impossible for so many of our poorer citizens to live the life of rational beings should no longer be tolerated, and that the opportunities for modest comfort and cultural development should be made available in due measure to all.

"There is indeed much to be done before we can claim that that guarantee has been fulfilled. If we refuse to undertake its fulfilment, we would have to share the reproach directed by James Connolly against those who bubble over with enthusiasm for Ireland but witness unmoved the sufferings of so many of her people.

"If we are truly followers of the men we commemorate to-day, Ireland must mean for us not merely 'a combination of chemical elements,' but the living people of our own country. We must be prepared, in the words of the proclamation, 'to cherish all the children of the nation equally.' We must, too, make ourselves oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government and hearken resolutely to Tone's exhortation to 'abolish the memory of all past dissensions.'

"Then, indeed, may we place the cause of the Irish Republic—as it was placed in Easter Week—under the protection of the Most High God, with full confidence that in His good time and with patient perseverance on our part, it will triumph."

## APPENDIX II

### THE NEGOTIATIONS

"My exact position in this whole matter of a settlement with England," wrote Mr. de Valera in a letter to the *Irish Independent*, July 20, 1923, "is on record in State papers, by which I claim to be judged, and not by the statements of opponents who have an interest in misrepresentation. Let the documents be published—all of them—they were promised to the Irish people almost a year and a half ago. . . . Our Cabinet policy, accepted by the whole Ministry, including those who had been released from prison as well as the substitute Ministers, was for the Association of Ireland as an outside State with the group of self-governing States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland, which claim to be co-equal and voluntary partners at the head of the British Empire, and are known collectively as the 'British Commonwealth of Nations.' The proposed association was limited to certain well-defined purposes, and the terms of the proposal explicitly guaranteed equality of status for Ireland with the most independent of the States, including Great Britain itself. This association we meant, and were prepared to accept, rather as a concession to the sentiment of our fellow-countrymen in Ulster than to England—it was the price we were prepared to pay for a united Ireland.

"As regards the 'Ulster question' directly: Our proposals were that the fullest measure of local autonomy, consistent with the unity of Ireland as a whole, should be granted to the aggregate of those areas in which by a majority vote the residents demanded a separate parliament. We were prepared to take as the unit of area for the plebiscite either the constituencies prior to the Act of 1920 or any smaller unit such as the Poor Law Guardian or the District Council areas. By that proposal Derry City and the greater

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parts of the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, as well as South Armagh and South Down, would be represented directly in the National Parliament. On no plea could the 'Ulster' minority demand anything more. Our proposal was based on an earnest desire to be just and fair. The nature of man, and all history, proves that only on such a foundation can peace be secured. Mr. Lloyd George's purpose, on the contrary, was to make good the position he had created by the 'Partition Act of 1920.'

"That was apparent in the terms of his first invitation to me. It was on this question that I broke with him in London. My last words to him were—that unless England helped us to get a united Ireland, thereby undoing the greatest wrong she had been guilty of in modern times, she was not entitled and would not get any concessions from us. At the Cabinet meeting of December 3, I asked Mr. Griffith to break on this same question if Mr. Lloyd George tried to persist in his design. At one point during the meeting I had actually made up my own mind to go over to London and break with him on it myself. I had come to that decision whilst Cathal Brugha was pointing out to Mr. Griffith that to sign the British proposals would split the country from top to bottom. But Mr. Griffith's promise that he would not sign, but would instead leave the question open so that Dáil Éireann might approach it unfettered, made it, as I thought, unnecessary for me to go. Both with Mr. Griffith and myself a united Ireland was the dearest object of all—how he allowed himself to be deluded by the Boundary Commission idea I have never been able to understand. The parts of his letters dealing with this make pathetic reading, and when published they will be a warning for any future Irishmen who have to deal with England as we have had.

"As regards the proposal to accept the King of Great Britain as the Head of the Association of States, the actual proposal was:

"That for the purposes of the Association, Ireland shall recognise His Britannic Majesty as head of the Association.

"What this proposal involved cannot be better explained

than in the words in which Cathal Brugha accepted it. I have it in a priceless note in his own handwriting. He gave it to me at my request in the last week of October 1921, just when the British were pressing the delegation for recognition of the Crown, and we were all seeking a solution. Up to that time our proposals had all lacked this one link. The moment it was supplied, and that I knew that I had a United Cabinet accepting it, I knew for the first time that a satisfactory peace could be made. Patience and strength would have been required, just such patience and strength as have enabled the Turks to win at Lausanne, but the outcome could not be in doubt. If the Irish Press and the Irish bishops had stood behind the Republican Cabinet in that autumn of 1921 and had helped to keep the people firm and courageous, there could have been no split, no danger of civil war, and Emmet's epitaph might now be written.

"Cathal's note runs:

" 'All other matters being satisfactorily settled, we are prepared to recommend to our people that the accepted head of Great Britain be recognised as the head of the new Association. We are prepared to co-operate with, and send a representative to, whatever council is appointed to conduct the affairs of the group. In matters that do not affect the group we continue to act independently, our form of government remains the same as at present, and can only be altered by the Irish people themselves.' "

## APPENDIX III

### THE DE VALERA—LLOYD GEORGE CORRESPONDENCE

After de Valera's return to Dublin in July some fifteen letters and telegrams were exchanged between himself and Mr. Lloyd George.

The following extracts may soothe the serious-minded reader for any flippancy in the text:

"It should be obvious that we could not urge the acceptance of such proposals upon our people. A certain treaty of free association with the British Commonwealth group, as with a partial league of nations, we would have been ready to recommend, and as a Government to negotiate and take responsibility for, had we an assurance that the entry of the nation as a whole into such association would secure for it the allegiance of the present dissenting minority, to meet whose sentiment alone this step could be contemplated." (De Valera, August 10, 1921.)

"'Dominion status' for Ireland everyone who understands the conditions knows to be illusory. . . . The most explicit guarantees, including the Dominions' acknowledged right to secede, would be necessary to secure for Ireland an equal degree of freedom. There is no suggestion, however, in the proposals made of any such guarantees. Instead, the natural position is reversed: our geographical situation is made the basis of denials and restrictions unheard of in the case of the Dominions." (De Valera, August 10.)

"We cannot admit the right of the British Government to mutilate our country, either in its own interest or at the call of any section of our population. We do not contemplate the use of force. If your Government stands aside, we can effect a complete reconciliation." (De Valera, August 10.)

". . . We feel bound to leave you in no doubt of our meaning. . . . In our opinion, nothing is to be gained by prolonging a theoretical discussion of the National status

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which you may be willing to accept as compared with that of the great self-governing Dominions . . . but we must direct your attention to one point upon which you lay some emphasis, and upon which no British Government can compromise—namely the claim that we should acknowledge the right of Ireland to secede from her allegiance to the King. . . . The geographical propinquity of Ireland to the British Isles is a fundamental fact. . . . Ireland has sent members to the British Parliament for more than a hundred years. . . . Great numbers, in all the Irish provinces, are profoundly attached to the Throne. . . . We are profoundly glad to have your agreement that Northern Ireland cannot be coerced. . . . Our proposals present to the Irish people an opportunity such as never dawned in their history before; but beyond them we cannot go.” (Lloyd George, August 13.)

“We long to end the conflict between Britain and Ireland . . . the responsibility for the continuance of the conflict rests on you.” (De Valera, August 24.)

“The British Government are profoundly disappointed. . . . Our proposals have gone beyond all precedent, and have been approved as liberal by the whole civilised world. . . . The only criticism of them which I have yet heard outside Ireland is from those who maintain that our proposals have outstripped both warrant and wisdom in their liberality. Your letter shows no recognition of this, and further negotiation must, I fear, be futile unless some definite progress is made towards acceptance of a basis.” (Lloyd George, August 26.)

“I shall refrain from commenting on the fallacious historical references in your last communication. The present is the reality with which we have to deal. . . . The main historical and geographical facts are not in dispute, but your Government insists on viewing them from your standpoint. . . . Force will not solve the problem. . . . The fact that for 750 years this problem has resisted a solution by force is evidence and warning sufficient. It is true wisdom, therefore, and true statesmanship, not any false idealism, that prompts me and my colleagues.” (De Valera, August 30.)



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"... The principle of Government by consent of the Governed is the foundation of British constitutional development, but we cannot accept as a basis of practical conference an interpretation of that principle which might commit us to any demands you might present—even to the extent of setting up a Republic and repudiating the Crown . . . if your real objection to our proposals is that they offer Ireland less than the liberty which we have described, that objection can be explored at a conference." (Lloyd George, September 7.)

"We have no hesitation in declaring our willingness to enter a conference. . . . Our nation has formally declared its independence and recognises itself as a Sovereign State. . . ." (De Valera, September 12.)

"I informed your emissaries . . . that the reiteration of your claim . . . would make conference between us impossible." (Lloyd George, September 15.)

"... I am surprised. . . . It should be obvious that in a case like this if there is to be any result, the negotiators must meet without prejudice. . . ." (De Valera, September 16.)

"... It is idle to say that. . . ." (Lloyd George, September 16.)

"... I have never ceased to recognise myself for what I was and am. . . . Had it been our desire to add to the solid substance of Ireland's right the veneer of the technicalities of international usage which you now introduce, we might have already claimed the advantage of all those consequences which you fear would flow from the reception of our delegates now. Believe me, we have but one object at heart. . . ." (De Valera, September 17.)

"... Unless the second paragraph of your letter of the 12th is withdrawn, conference between us is impossible. . . ." (Lloyd George, September 18.)

"... We request you, therefore, to state whether your letter of September 7th is intended to be a demand for a surrender on our part or an invitation to a conference free on both sides and without prejudice should agreement not be reached." (De Valera, September 19.)

"... We feel that conference and not correspondence is

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the most practical and hopeful way to an understanding. . . . We send herewith a fresh invitation to a conference in London." (Lloyd George, September 29.)

" . . . Our respective positions have been stated and are understood. . . . We accept the invitation. . . ." (De Valera, September 30.)

## APPENDIX IV

### TEXT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH TREATY

#### *Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland*

1. Ireland shall have the same constitutional status in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, with a Parliament having powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Ireland and an Executive responsible to that Parliament, and shall be styled and known as the Irish Free State.

2. Subject to the provisions hereinafter set out the position of the Irish Free State in relation to the Imperial Parliament and Government and otherwise shall be that of the Dominion of Canada, and the law, practice and constitutional usage governing the relationship of the Crown or the representative of the Crown and of the Imperial Parliament to the Dominion of Canada shall govern their relationship to the Irish Free State.

3. The representative of the Crown in Ireland shall be appointed in like manner as the Governor-General of Canada, and in accordance with the practice observed in the making of such appointments.

4. The oath to be taken by Members of the Parliament of the Irish Free State shall be in the following form:

I . . . . . do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V, his heirs and successors by law, in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations.

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5. The Irish Free State shall assume liability for the service of the Public Debt of the United Kingdom as existing at the date hereof and towards the payment of war pensions as existing at that date in such proportion as may be fair and equitable, having regard to any just claims on the part of Ireland by way of set off or counterclaim, the amount of such sums being determined in default of agreement by the arbitration of one or more independent persons being citizens of the British Empire.

6. Until an arrangement has been made between the British and Irish Governments whereby the Irish Free State undertakes her own coastal defence, the defence by sea of Great Britain and Ireland shall be undertaken by His Majesty's Imperial Forces, but this shall not prevent the construction or maintenance by the Government of the Irish Free State of such vessels as are necessary for the protection of the Revenue or the Fisheries.

The foregoing provisions of this article shall be reviewed at a conference of Representatives of the British and Irish Governments to be held at the expiration of five years from the date hereof with a view to the undertaking by Ireland of a share in her own coastal defence.

7. The Government of the Irish Free State shall afford to His Majesty's Imperial Forces:

- (a) In time of peace such harbour and other facilities as are indicated in the Annex hereto, or such other facilities as may from time to time be agreed between the British Government and the Government of the Irish Free State; and
- (b) In time of war or of strained relations with a Foreign Power such harbour and other facilities as the British Government may require for the purposes of such defence as aforesaid.

8. With a view to securing the observance of the principle of international limitation of armaments, if the Government of the Irish Free State establishes and maintains a military defence force, the establishments thereof shall not exceed in size such proportion of the military establishments main-

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tained in Great Britain as that which the population of Ireland bears to the population of Great Britain.

9. The ports of Great Britain and the Irish Free State shall be freely open to the ships of the other country on payment of the customary port and other dues.

10. The Government of the Irish Free State agrees to pay fair compensation on terms not less favourable than those accorded by the Act of 1920 to judges, officials, members of Police Forces, and other Public Servants, who are discharged by it or who retire in consequence of the change of government effected in pursuance hereof.

Provided that this agreement shall not apply to members of the Auxiliary Police Force or to persons recruited in Great Britain for the Royal Irish Constabulary during the two years next preceding the date hereof. The British Government will assume responsibility for such compensation or pensions as may be payable to any of these excepted persons.

11. Until the expiration of one month from the passing of the Act of Parliament for the ratification of this instrument, the powers of the Parliament and the Government of the Irish Free State shall not be exercisable as respects Northern Ireland, and the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, shall, so far as they relate to Northern Ireland, remain of full force and effect, and no election shall be held for the return of members to serve in the Parliament of the Irish Free State for constituencies in Northern Ireland, unless a resolution is passed by both Houses of the Parliament of Northern Ireland in favour of the holding of such elections before the end of the said month.

12. If, before the expiration of the said month, an address is presented to His Majesty by both Houses of the Parliament of Northern Ireland to that effect, the powers of the Parliament and the Government of the Irish Free State shall no longer extend to Northern Ireland, and the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920 (including those relating to the Council of Ireland), shall, so far as they relate to Northern Ireland, continue to be of full force and effect, and this instrument shall have effect subject to the necessary modifications.

## *Appendix IV*

Provided that if such an address is so presented a Commission consisting of three persons, one to be appointed by the Government of the Irish Free State, one to be appointed by the Government of Northern Ireland, and one who shall be Chairman, to be appointed by the British Government, shall determine, in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland, and for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of this instrument, the boundary of Northern Ireland shall be such as may be determined by such Commission.

13. For the purpose of the last foregoing article, the powers of the Parliament of Southern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, to elect members of the Council of Ireland, shall, after the Parliament of the Irish Free State is constituted, be exercised by that Parliament.

14. After the expiration of the said month, if no such address as is mentioned in Article 12 hereof is presented, the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland shall continue to exercise as respects Northern Ireland the powers conferred on them by the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, but the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State shall in Northern Ireland have in relation to matters in respect of which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has not power to make laws under that Act (including matters which under the said Act are within the jurisdiction of the Council of Ireland) the same powers as in the rest of Ireland subject to such other provisions as may be agreed in manner hereinafter appearing.

15. At any time after the date hereof the Government of Northern Ireland and the provisional Government of Southern Ireland hereinafter constituted may meet for the purpose of discussing the provisions subject to which the last foregoing Article is to operate in the event of no such address as is therein mentioned being presented, and those provisions may include:

- (a) safeguards with regard to patronage in Northern Ireland,

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- (b) safeguards with regard to the collection of revenue in Northern Ireland,
- (c) safeguards with regard to import and export duties affecting the trade or industry of Northern Ireland,
- (d) safeguards for minorities in Northern Ireland,
- (e) the settlement of the financial relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State,
- (f) the establishment and powers of a local militia in Northern Ireland and the relation of the Defence Forces of the Irish Free State and of Northern Ireland respectively;

and if at any such meeting provisions are agreed to, the same shall have effect as if they were included amongst the provisions subject to which the powers of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State are to be exercisable in Northern Ireland under Article 14 hereof.

16. Neither the Parliament of the Irish Free State nor the Parliament of Northern Ireland shall make any law so as either directly or indirectly to endow any religion or prohibit or restrict the free exercise thereof or give any preference or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status or affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at the school or make any discrimination as respects State aid between schools under the management of different religious denominations or divert from any religious denomination or any educational institution any of its property except for public utility purposes and on payment of compensation.

17. By way of provisional arrangement for the administration of Southern Ireland during the interval which must elapse between the date hereof and the constitution of a Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State in accordance therewith, steps shall be taken forthwith for summoning a meeting of members of Parliament elected for constituencies in Southern Ireland since the passing of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and for constituting a provisional Government, and the British Government shall take the steps necessary to transfer to such provisional

## *Appendix IV*

Government the powers and machinery requisite for the discharge of its duties, provided that every member of such provisional Government shall have signified in writing his or her acceptance of this instrument. But this arrangement shall not continue in force beyond the expiration of twelve months from the date hereof.

18. This instrument shall be submitted forthwith by His Majesty's Government for the approval of Parliament and by the Irish signatories to a meeting summoned for the purposes of the members elected to sit in the House of Commons of Southern Ireland, and, if approved, shall be ratified by the necessary legislation.

*(Signed)*

On behalf of the British  
Delegation.

D. LLOYD GEORGE.  
AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.  
BIRKENHEAD.  
WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.  
L. WORTHINGTON-EVANS.  
HAMAR GREENWOOD.  
GORDON HEWART.

On behalf of the Irish  
Delegation.

ART Ó GRIOBHTHA.  
MICHEÁL Ó COILEAIN.  
RÍOBÁRD BARTÚN.  
E. S. Ó DÚGAIN.  
SEÓRSA GHABHAIN UÍ  
DHUBHTHAIGH.

6th December 1921.

### *Annex*

1. The following are the specific facilities required :

#### *Dockyard Port at Berehaven*

(a) Admiralty property and rights to be retained as at the date hereof. Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties.

#### *Queenstown*

(b) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties. Certain mooring buoys to be retained for use of His Majesty's ship.



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### *Belfast Lough*

(c) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties.

### *Lough Swilly*

(d) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties.

### *Aviation*

(e) Facilities in the neighbourhood of the above ports for coastal defence by air.

### *Oil Fuel Storage*

(f) Haulbowline, Rathmullen.—To be offered for sale to commercial companies under guarantee that purchasers shall maintain a certain minimum stock for Admiralty purposes.

2. A Convention shall be made between the British Government and the Government of the Irish Free State to give effect to the following conditions:

(a) That submarine cables shall not be landed or wireless stations for communication with places outside Ireland be established except by agreement with the British Government; that the existing cable landing rights and wireless concessions shall not be withdrawn except by agreement with the British Government; and that the British Government shall be entitled to land additional submarine cables or to establish additional wireless stations for communication with places outside Ireland.

(b) That lighthouses, buoys, beacons, and any navigational marks or navigational aids shall be maintained by the Government of the Irish Free State as at the date hereof and shall not be removed or added to except by agreement with the British Government.

(c) That war signal stations shall be closed down and left in charge of care and maintenance parties, the Government of the Irish Free State being offered the option of taking

#### *Appendix IV*

them over and working them for commercial purposes subject to Admiralty inspection, and guaranteeing the upkeep of existing telegraphic communications therewith.

3. A Convention shall be made between the same Governments for the regulation of Civil Communications by Air.

## APPENDIX V

### DE VALERA'S ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

The following is Mr. de Valera's own text of his "Proposed Treaty of Association between Ireland and the British Commonwealth," more generally known as "Document Number 2":

#### *Status of Ireland*

1. That the legislative, executive and judicial authority of Ireland shall be derived solely from the people of Ireland.

#### *Terms of Association*

2. That, for the purposes of common concern, Ireland shall be associated with the States of the British Commonwealth, viz.: The Kingdom of Great Britain, the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa.

3. That when acting as an associate the rights, status and privileges of Ireland shall be in no respect less than those enjoyed by any of the component States of the British Commonwealth.

4. That the matters of "common concern" shall include Defence, Peace and War, Political Treaties, and all matters now treated as of common concern amongst the States of the British Commonwealth, and that in these matters there shall be between Ireland and the States of the British Commonwealth "such concerted action founded on consultation as the several Governments may determine."

5. That in virtue of this association of Ireland with the States of the British Commonwealth, citizens of Ireland in any of these States shall not be subject to any disabilities which a citizen of one of the component States of the British Commonwealth would not be subject to, and reciprocally for citizens of these States in Ireland.

6. That for the purposes of the Association, Ireland shall recognise His Britannic Majesty as head of the Association.

7. That, so far as her resources permit, Ireland shall provide for her own defence by sea, land and air, and shall repel by force any attempt by a foreign Power to violate the integrity of her soil and territorial waters, or use them for any purpose hostile to Great Britain and the other associated States.

With slight changes of phraseology the remainder of Mr. de Valera's proposals are identical with the Treaty signed. In some versions of this alternative proposal even the clauses in the Treaty relating to Ulster are retained, again with slight changes of phraseology. In Mr. de Valera's own version, however, Ulster is not mentioned in the text but in an Addendum, to be proposed as a separate resolution to the Dáil. It runs:

*"North-East Ulster*

"Resolved:

"That, whilst refusing to admit the right of any part of Ireland to be excluded from the supreme authority of the Parliament of Ireland, or that the relations between the Parliament of Ireland and any subordinate legislature in Ireland can be a matter for treaty with a government outside Ireland, nevertheless, in sincere regard for internal peace, and in order to make manifest our desire not to bring force or coercion to bear upon any substantial part of the Province of Ulster, whose inhabitants may now be unwilling to accept the national authority, we are prepared to grant to that portion of Ulster which is defined as Northern Ireland in the British Government of Ireland Act of 1920, privileges and safeguards not less substantial than those provided for in the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland signed in London on December 6th, 1921."

The main practical difference in the clauses not quoted here is the absence of any oath of allegiance or a Governor-General. All the other restrictions denounced in the Treaty are there: on military forces; British control over four

## *Unique Dictator*

Irish naval bases; and liability for a share of the British public debt and payment of war pensions, "the amount of such sums being determined in default of agreement, by the arbitration of one or more independent persons, being citizens of Ireland or of the British Commonwealth."

Mr. de Valera was willing to agree to the following oath, "if it be really necessary and we can get all else we want":

"I do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State, to the Treaty of Association, and to recognise the King of Great Britain as Head of the Association." (*Peace by Ordeal*, p. 261.)

The Treaty oath reads:

"I do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established, and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V, his heirs and successors by law, in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations."

Mr. de Valera's hastily worded oath at the Cabinet meeting of December 3 has often been quoted against him. It was even alleged that wording ran "Head of the Associated States," which would certainly give his critics a handle against him. But it is clear from Pakenham's account that Mr. de Valera only threw out the alternative oath in an argument as to the need for any oath at all, as the very clumsy phrasing shows.

These unhappy formulas may now be buried with a wreath apiece: "Of course," said Cathal Brugha, "if the British wanted an oath from us to respect whatever Treaty was made, we might give it, provided they swear to us in return." Of the final words of the Treaty oath, Mr. Thomas Johnson said in the Dáil he defied anyone there to explain to him what it meant.

The de Valera explanation of the similarity of clauses in both documents as given by Mr. Childers in his organ (May 11, 1922) was: "the Ulster clauses were the work of Messrs. Collins and Griffith in conjunction with the British delegates and were inserted in the Treaty document

as signed in London. In Dublin, after the signature, Mr. de Valera in the first instance adopted them in full in his preliminary draft of Document No. 2. . . . In the revised and final version . . . they were omitted, and a declaratory resolution substituted. Eamon de Valera was not responsible in any way for these clauses; but once signed . . . they placed him in a situation of the gravest difficulty; for to attack the terms bearing on a domestic question was an altogether different thing from attacking the main provisions of the Treaty."

## APPENDIX VI

### THE CIVIL WAR: DE VALERA'S CASE

#### (1) *The Mansion House Conference*

After the breakdown of the Mansion House Conference, presided over by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Mr. de Valera issued the following statement which was published in the Press on May 2, 1922:

"In the proposals of Labour, Cathal Brugha and myself recognised broadly in principle a basis on which immediate peace could be secured, the army united, and a strong stable executive set up, enjoying the confidence of all sections, and really capable of maintaining order and governing the country. This to our minds is the chief need of the nation at the present moment.

"The Labour proposals obviously refer to a period during which the question of the 'Treaty' would be left in abeyance. The problem was to secure agreement as to the terms on which this period should end. Mr. Griffith insists on having an election in June on the present partial register. Republicans maintain that the proposed 'Treaty' which involved the abandonment of the Republic and the acceptance of the British Crown and the British Empire, should not be put to the people whilst England's threat of war prevents the free will of the people from being truly expressed.

"They maintain, further, that there are rights which a minority may justly uphold, even by arms, against a majority, and that such a right is that of defending and preserving for themselves and for all those who come after them, the precious heritage of belonging to a nation that can never be said to have voluntarily surrendered its territory or its independence.

"For my part, I see clearly that unless the question of

the 'Treaty' be held in abeyance indefinitely, it must be decided by force or by reference to the people at some stage. In the interests of peace I proposed to Mr. Griffith that it be referred to the people but not until at least six months have elapsed. For the intervening period arrangements on the lines of the Labour proposals could be made; the army united under a single command, Dáil Eireann could be kept in session, the proposed Constitution could be introduced, adult suffrage and other necessary legislation enacted, and full preparations made for a peaceful election.

"Time would be secured for the present passions to subside, for personalities to disappear, and the fundamental differences between the two sides to be appreciated—time during which Ireland's reputation could be vindicated, the work of national reconstruction begun, and normal conditions restored. I promised, if Mr. Griffith agreed, that I would use whatever influence I possess with the Republican Party and with the army to win acceptance for the proposal, not indeed as a principle of right or justice, but as a principle of peace and order. Mr. Griffith refused.

"There is nothing in the terms of the Articles of Agreement as approved by the majority party in Dáil Eireann which necessitates the holding of an election before December next. It is only the British 'Irish Free State Act' which prescribes elections in June. Such an Act should not be held to regulate our affairs. The rights, the peace, the well-being of our country should surely be paramount with us."

*(2) Speech to Fianna Fáil Convention*

De Valera has only defended himself at long intervals, but sometimes from his speeches flashes out some evidence that he feels deeply the charge that he is in any way responsible for the darker deeds of the Civil War and after. Once Mr. Cosgrave on the eve of his defeat made a sarcastic reference to the Irish aptitude for judging national leaders harshly. He said that the English did take some pride in their leaders, but if he were thrown out of power to-morrow all the man in the street would say was: "Begob, Cosgrave



## *Unique Dictator*

is down at last!" Then with more wit than dignity, he added that if Mr. de Valera came into power, and came up against a serious crisis, all the man in the street would say was: "Begob, the long fellow will have to give another twist!"

"The other day the President of the Executive Council had accused him of giving another twist," de Valera told the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis in October 1931. "The only twist he had ever given had been if he had been trying to get through a door and a crowd tried to shove him into the opposite corner, and then, of course, he might have to change direction slightly. He had made no change except such as would be made by a man steering a ship to a particular port and if that ship were buffeted out of its course and he had to get it back on the right track.

"They had now to take cognisance of the fact that the Treaty had brought about a fundamental change; at various stages they had to recognise the position and use their judgment in dealing with it. Their mission was to convert the Irish people, to lead them to believe again that Freedom was theirs and that, if united, they would achieve it. He never believed in the policy of bullying people. When some gentlemen now prating about democracy tried their bullying methods on people he had stood against them. He might have been deemed too weak by those gentlemen, too considerate for people that might have suffered if an ambush was held in a particular place, too sympathetic to be good in a revolution. But whatever he might be he was not callous; he did not believe in bullying or intimidation, which was the wrongest possible way to try to get out of difficulties. He had been accused of being silent at certain times. The only times he had ever kept silent was when there was a danger that his words might be twisted unfairly and used against those he might condemn. There were, of course, limits beyond which that could not be carried. . . .

"What was the history of his attitude towards majority rule? There was a conference on May 2, 1922, in the Mansion House, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Dublin. That conference did not succeed in its object, and

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he issued a statement immediately afterwards. In that he said that unless the question of the Treaty was to be held permanently in abeyance, it must be decided by force or by reference to the people at some stage, and in the interests of peace he proposed to Mr. Griffith that it be referred to the people, but not until at least six months had elapsed.

“That postponement was suggested because the register was then unsound and did not at all represent the electorate. Clearly in that document he accepted majority rule when he was willing to submit the question to the people. On May 20, eighteen days afterwards, the Pact was signed by the late Michael Collins and himself, and was agreed to by both parties in the Dáil; it was accepted unanimously by Dáil Éireann, and when presented to the Ard-Fheis of Sinn Féin, was also accepted unanimously. It was then agreed that, in the event of a Coalition Government finding it necessary to dissolve, a General Election was to be held as soon as possible on adult suffrage. That meant that if the Coalition Cabinet could not agree, the matter would be settled by the people. It was not after the Civil War, but before it, that he placed the programme before the people. If both sides were going to hold to their opinions, that was the only way in which it could be settled unless force was to be used. ‘And,’ declared Mr. de Valera emphatically, ‘I did not break the Pact.’

“But before he knew where he was, he found himself in a fight in which they had the Executive of the day suppressing the Republican courts and the Republican Parliament, in a fight in which the Executive arrogated to themselves all authority.

“I have been a constitutionalist,” he said, “from beginning to end in this matter.” It was admitted by the other side that they could not disestablish Republican institutions until an appeal had been made to the people. That was why he had taken the stand he did, and he was not ashamed he did. He regretted such a situation had ever arisen. The greatest wrong ever done the country by Britain was when the Treaty was forced upon them and led to Civil War.

“He had always stood by majority rule as the only rule,

## *Unique Dictator*

and the only way for settling public questions unless a resort was to be made to force.

"Why had Fianna Fáil been founded? Because he could not see any other way of restoring order unless by majority rule. He had always stood by that principle. When the Four Courts had fallen and fighting was proceeding in O'Connell Street, he went to the men in charge to see whether even then peace could not be obtained. He went to the Gresham Hotel and asked the men in responsible positions in the Republican movement if they could not do something to end the position and save the lives of their young men.

"He had been informed a peace effort had been made the previous day, the terms suggested being that the men should be allowed to go away with their arms, vacate the positions they occupied and leave the whole matter to Dáil Eireann to settle. No answer had been received to that, and he asked what could be done about it. He felt that here was a great chance of securing peace, by letting the Four Courts be regarded as a single incident and letting the Dáil decide the questions at issue. To make assurance doubly sure he sent two messengers. One was an old man who said it was a terrible thing to see these young men fighting.

"He told that old man to take the message and say that he would pledge his word it was being sent in good faith because he knew that men like Cathal Brugha would keep their word. The late Father Albert was the second messenger. One messenger returned to tell him that the message had been delivered to Mr. Collins and Mr. Griffith, and that their answer was, 'Let them lay down their arms and then we'll talk to them.' That might have been a strong attitude to adopt, but it was a very unwise one. Had the offer been accepted the whole Civil War would have ended with the Four Courts incident and terms would have been arranged before the war had properly commenced."

### *(3) Statement to Dáil Eireann*

In his speech in Dáil Eireann on October 15, 1931, Mr. de Valera said:

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“It was a forlorn hope, and I admit it now and have always admitted that the Volunteers who tried to save the Republic when the majority of the Irish people departed from it because their opponents had all the support the British Empire could put behind them were misguided if you will, unreasonable if you will, but they were brave men anyhow, and let us not deny to them the decent respect we have for the brave. They have done terrible things recently, I admit, that is if they are responsible, but let us appeal to them and ask them in God’s name not to do it.

“Would it not be a good day’s work if we tried to get these people and give them an opportunity of becoming really valuable citizens, and an opportunity of being effective and able to co-operate with the majority. I have pointed out time after time that if there is to be any progress in this country and freedom is again to be achieved it will not be through the I.R.B. but only through the advances and the leadership that will be given by the elected representatives of the majority of the people.”

He believed that they could get nothing out of secret societies. They might bring success for a time, but he would say this—that the Catholic doctrine in respect to them was right, because every evil that that doctrine said would flow from them had flowed, to his own knowledge. There was no further use for the organisation that was now said to exist, because if there was to be a fight again for Irish independence it could only be effective under the leadership of the Government elected by the majority of the people. He appealed for consideration of the situation not as parties, but as Irishmen who knew the history of their country.

## APPENDIX VII

### DE VALERA ON THE I.R.A.

In his belief the I.R.A. was not in its constitution a revolutionary secret organisation, and though it might have a pledge to the original constitution of the Volunteers, he did not believe it had any secret oath. . . . "To our standards these men may be dense and wayward," he continued, "but I am not going to stigmatise any one of them as vicious in himself. Vicious methods are coming in upon them, and I want to warn them against them. If my will could do it, I would get all those arms in the country—I would say they are of no further use at the present time, because if there is to be a declaration of Irish independence, and if a fight for it would be effective, that can only be effective now under the leadership of the Government elected by the majority.

"Are they foolish enough to think that they can overthrow the forces that have behind them the people of this country? They cannot do it; it would be futile to hope. Suppose they were to be successful—they would be only successful after the bitterness of a civil war with brother against brother in different camps, weakening them, and weakening the nation as a whole."

The secret of their success between 1919 and 1921 was that they had the people behind them. . . . They finally got into a position in which leadership was given by the elected representatives of the majority of the people. Because the people of the country supported that Government they had succeeded. The courageous section of the people was that section which had to face the raiders of the Black and Tans after an ambush and did not shrink.

*(Dáil Éireann, October 15, 1931.)*

In his Presidential Address to the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis some weeks later, October 27, 1931, Mr. de Valera made

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some important explanations of his speech to the Dáil and his attitude towards political assassination:

“We must be very careful or we will let our sympathies run away with us in matters of right and wrong. . . . In another place I had to defend the principles and the motives which animated, I may say, nine-tenths of the young men who are at present in the ranks of the Irish Republican Army.

“I did so because I understand their motives and aims, and I understand the sequence of events which has placed them in that curious position, but there is one thing I cannot stand for or defend. I would be unfit to occupy the position which you have given me, if I did not express publicly that there is nobody in this country with the right to take human life. . . .

“It is suggested that if we got into power we would be a mere stalking horse for some other people. I want everyone to understand clearly that if we got into power and took the responsibility, we would take it with full realisation of our responsibility to the community as a whole, and we would have to carry out those responsibilities to maintain order, else we would be unworthy to take office.”

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## GLOSSARY

### (I) NAMES

**BOLAND, HARRY:** Dublin man and intimate friend of Michael Collins; sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for his part in 1916 Rising and prominent with de Valera in the jail strikes; one of the Secretaries of Sinn Fein from 1917; active with Collins in the I.R.A.; member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.; secretary to de Valera in the United States; member of Dáil Eireann; shot "trying to escape" by Free State troops in Grand Hotel, Skerries, Co. Dublin, 1922.

**BRUGHA, CATHAL:** Prominent Gaelic Leaguer and 1916 leader; half Yorkshire by descent; wounded 17 times in 1916; from 1919 onwards, Minister of Defence in Dáil Eireann; described by the *Morning Post* as "the foxy-haired, furtive-eyed leader of the irreconcilable gunmen." Killed in the Civil War in June 1922. Said of himself: "If roused, I'm no angel."

**CASEMENT, ROGER (1864-1916):** Ulsterman. Exposed Congo and Putomayo atrocities in 1904 and 1911 while in British Consular Service. Knighted against his wish for these services to humanity. Went to the United States and then to Germany in 1914 to carry out missions on behalf of the Irish Volunteers. Returned to Ireland in a German submarine in 1916. Executed under an Act of Edward III for treason. A further attempt to execute him morally was not so successful.

**CHILDERS, ERSKINE (1870-1922):** Author of many books, including *The Riddle of the Sands* and *The Framework of Home Rule*. Fought in the South African War with the C.I.V. in 1900 and won D.S.O. in the Great War. Took part in the famous naval raid on Cuxhaven.

Secretary to Irish Convention in 1917. Joined Sinn Fein in 1919. Spent his youth in County Wicklow. Took part in the Great War because he felt it was "the race destiny." Summed up his Irish political philosophy thus: "When England lets Ireland go, then at last, England will have finally conquered Ireland."

CLARKE, THOMAS J. (1857-1916). 1916 leader. Sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude in 1883 for his part in the dynamite campaign of the Eighties, described by John Devoy as a "more or less futile" one. Learned many trades in jail; wrote out the Bible in shorthand, timing himself by his pulse and the town clock. Saw his fellow-prisoners go mad or die in Dartmoor. Released in 1898. Returned to United States. Came back to Dublin in 1907 and was the outstanding leader in the I.R.B. Born in England, but lived in South Africa till he was ten.

COHALAN, DANIEL F.: Judge of the United States Supreme Court and Irish-American political leader.

COLLINS, MICHAEL (1890-1922): Chairman of the Provisional Government and Commander-in-Chief of Free State Army, 1922. Returned to Ireland in 1915 from London where he had worked in the Post Office Savings Bank, a stockbroker's office and the Guarantee Trust Company in Lombard Street. Took part in 1916, and from 1917 became one of the guiding spirits of the I.R.A., Sinn Fein and the I.R.B. His escapes from capture became legendary. A reward of £10,000 was offered for his capture. Arthur Griffith said of him: "He was the man whose indomitable will carried Ireland through the terrible crisis." He was killed in an ambush in West Cork on August 22, 1922.

DEVOY, JOHN (1842-1928): Famous Fenian leader and Irish-American revolutionary.

DILLON, JOHN: Colleague of John Redmond and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1918.

## *Unique Dictator*

FITZGERALD, DESMOND: Minister of Defence in Cosgrave Government, Minister of Publicity in Dáil Eireann, poet and 1916 insurgent.

GALLAGHER, FRANK: De Valera propagandist, leader of many hunger-strikes, first Editor of the *Irish Press* and associated with Sinn Fein Publicity with Erskine Childers and Desmond Fitzgerald during the Anglo-Irish struggle.

GRIFFITH, ARTHUR (1872-1922): The founder of Sinn Fein.

HEALY, TIM: First Governor-General of the Irish Free State and famous Irish parliamentarian.

LARKIN, JIM: Irish Labour leader.

LYNCH, LIAM: Corkman and leader of the Republicans in the South during the Civil War.

MELLOWS, LIAM: Leader of the 1916 insurrection in Galway and one of the Four Courts leaders in 1922. Executed by the Free State Government "as a reprisal."

MCCARTAN, Dr. PATRICK: Dáil Eireann representative in the United States and well-known Republican propagandist.

MCGARRITY, JOSEPH: Irish-American leader.

MACNEILL, EOIN: Irish scholar, professor, and one of the founders of the Irish Volunteers.

O'CONNOR, RORY: Leader of the Four Courts garrison in 1922.

O'HIGGINS, KEVIN: Vice-President of the Irish Free State and Minister for Justice. Assassinated in 1927.

PEARSE, PATRICK: 1916 leader and Irish educationalist.

REDMOND, JOHN: Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

STACK, AUSTIN: Kerryman and Volunteer leader. Arrested after the *Aud* and Casement incidents in 1916 and

sentenced to death; released with de Valera in 1917; co-Secretary of Sinn Féin with Harry Boland in 1917; Minister of Home Affairs, Dáil Eireann; leader of many hunger-strikes. Died in April 1929.

(2) ORGANISATIONS

**I.R.A.:** Name by which the Irish Volunteers were known after 1916. To-day, the militant physical force Republicans organised under that name, and declared illegal by both the Cosgrave and de Valera Governments. Their supporters deny they are an oath-bound or secret body. One of their recent manifestos states that while Independence is still their aim, it would be incomplete if it did not restore to the Irish people "the soil and its resources and all the natural wealth of the nation." In 1934, some of the I.R.A. leaders broke away and joined a new body called the Republican Congress associated with Left Wing Labour organisations in the Free State and the Six Counties on a programme based on the writings of James Connolly in 1916.

**IRISH REPUBLICAN BROTHERHOOD:** A secret revolutionary body founded in 1855 and continued as the Fenian organisation with various splits and fortunes down to 1916. It had affiliations with the Irish-American Clan na Gael. After 1916, Michael Collins was its guiding spirit in Ireland. Little is known of its subsequent history, but the neutral attitude it showed towards the 1921 Treaty led to vigorous denunciation of the I.R.B. by the anti-Treaty parties.

**SINN FFÉIN:** Originally the organisation founded by Arthur Griffith. To-day, the organisation of the same name that applies Griffith's policy of abstention from Parliament to the Irish Free State.

**IRISH VOLUNTEERS:** Founded in 1913 by Eoin MacNeill in response to the Carsonite campaign in North-East Ulster.

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“FOUR COURTS”: In the text this is used briefly to describe the section of the I.R.A. who repudiated the Treaty as a betrayal of the Republic proclaimed by Dáil Éireann in 1919 and wished to establish a military dictatorship. Their leaders were Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows and others.

CUMANN NA nGAEDHEAL: The Cosgrave organisation, now the United Ireland Party or Fine Gael.

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